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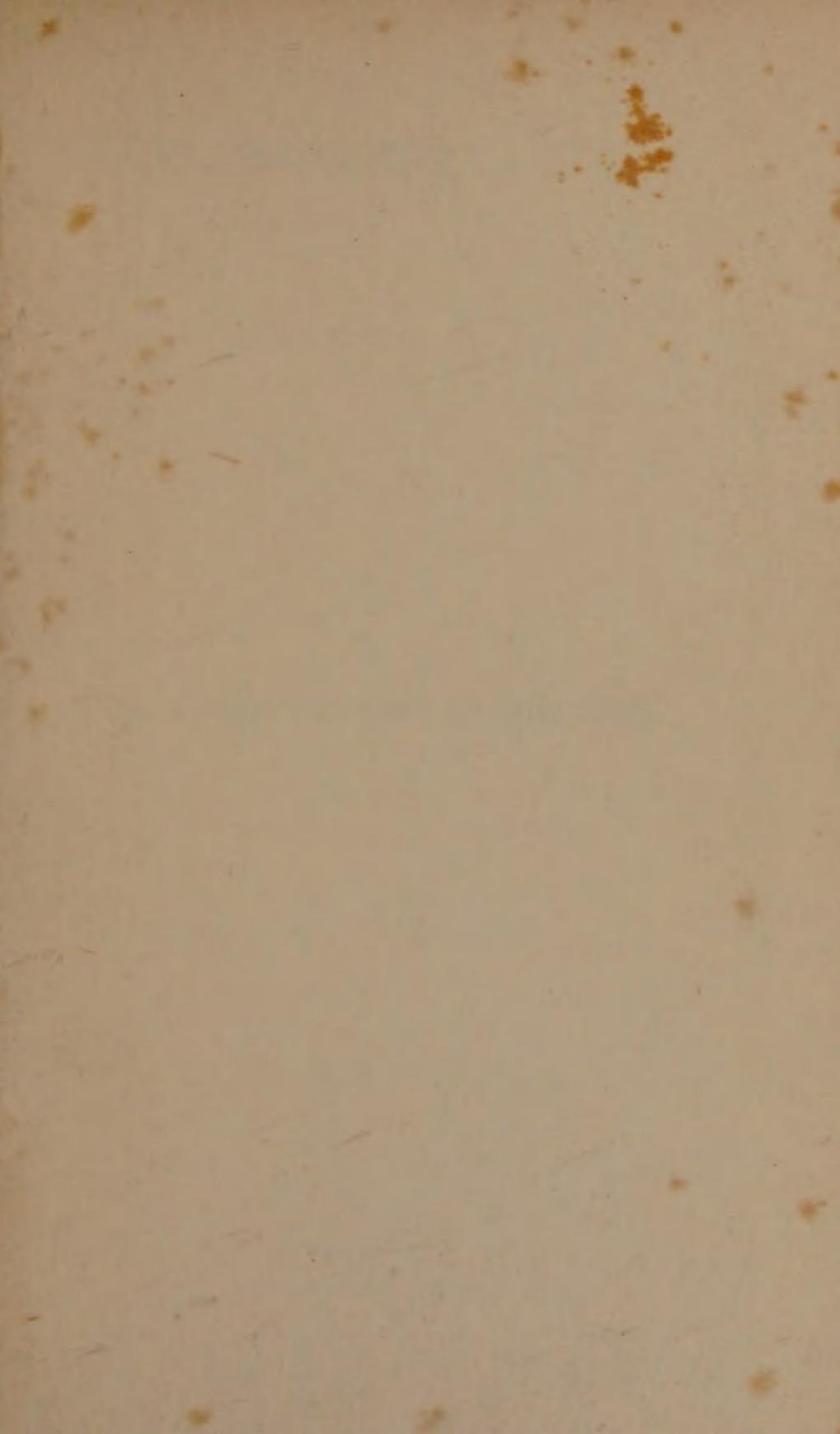


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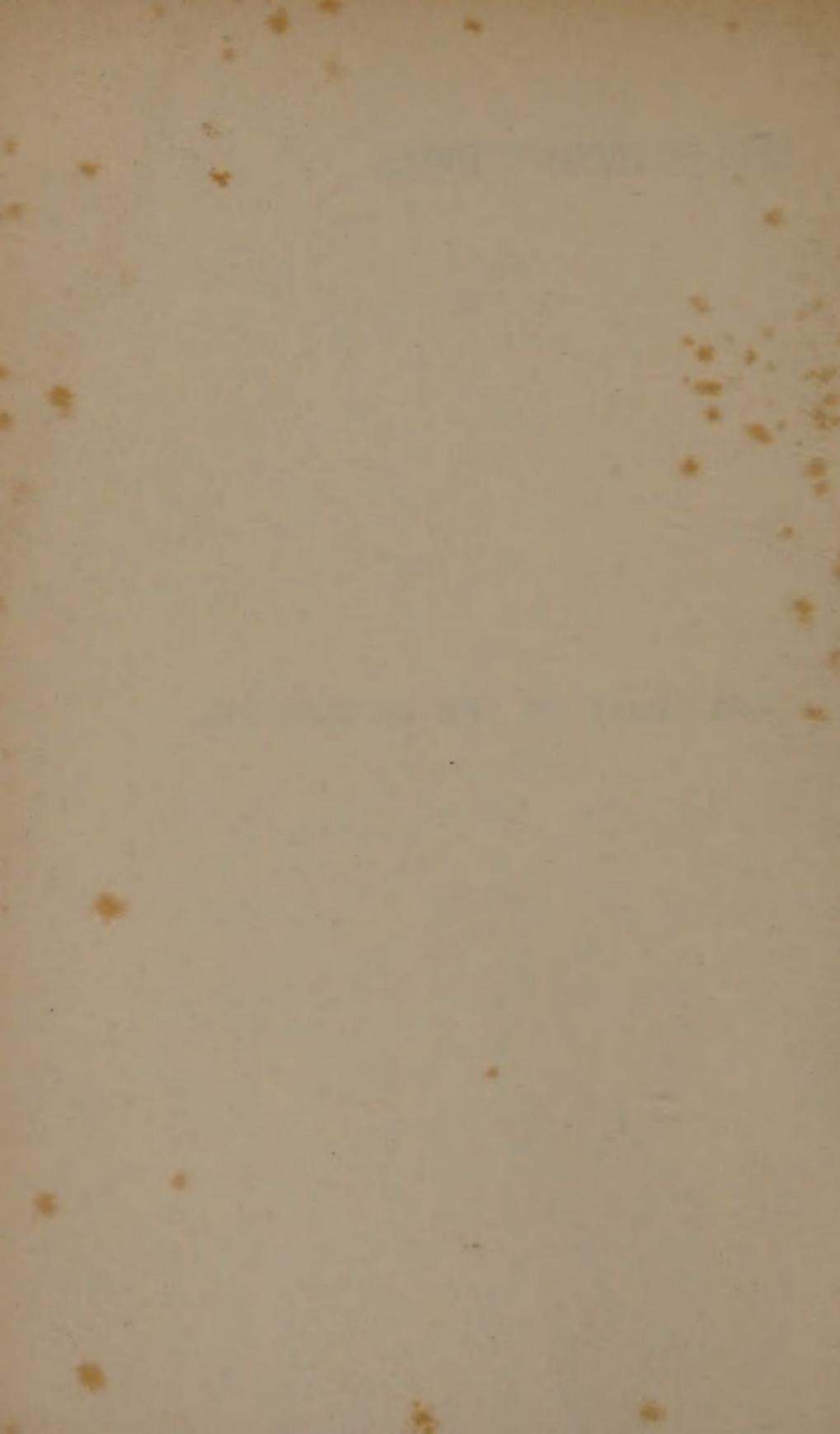




ERAS OF NONCONFORMITY

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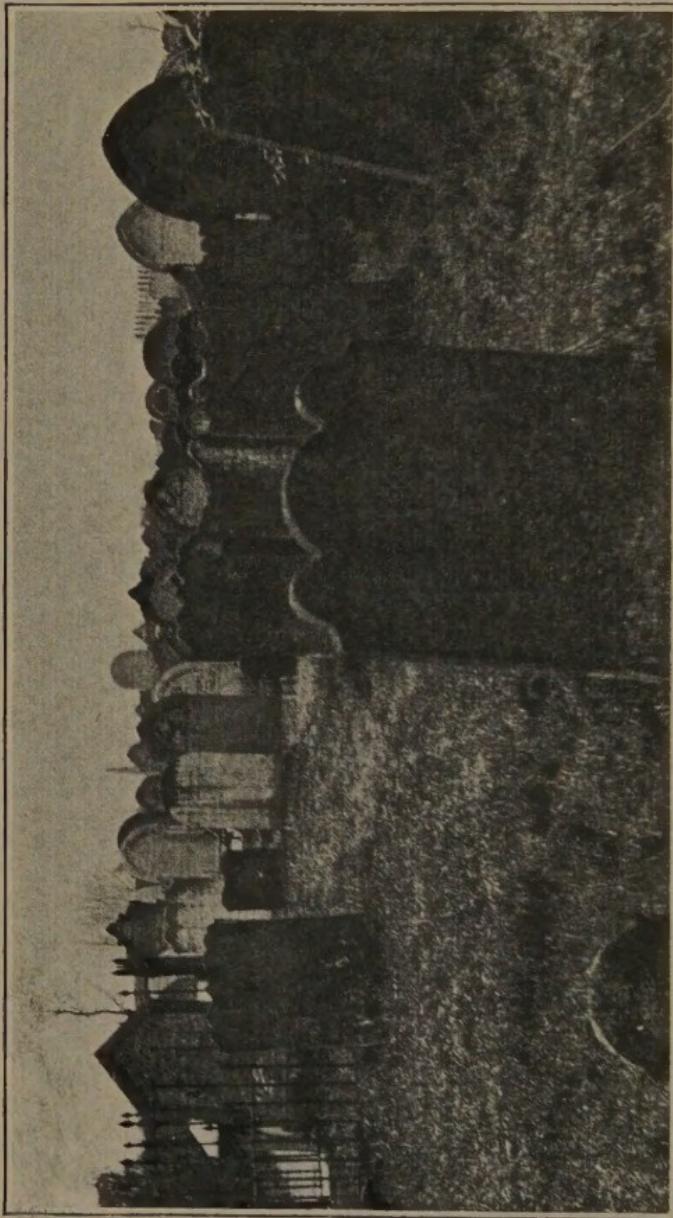
THE STORY OF THE ANABAPTISTS





THE OLD GRAVEYARD, HILL CLIFFE, NEAR WARRINGTON.

[See pages 13 and 14.]



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# THE STORY OF THE ANABAPTISTS

BY

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"THE SPIRITUAL BASIS OF NONCONFORMITY," ETC.

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## P R E F A C E

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THIS little volume is intended to afford some glimpses of a people who have played a more important part in the religious history of the world than the readers of history in general or Church history in particular are apt to suppose. In some minds the name Anabaptist excites an undefined aversion, whilst to many it has no significance whatever. A little light may remedy both misfortunes. In a space so limited as that at my disposal the sketch given must needs be sadly imperfect, though I hope it will convey no erroneous impressions. Mine, too, has been the difficult task of trying to prevent condensation from killing interest.

The authorities referred to are named in the text, and it is unnecessary to mention a score or more of them here. But special

acknowledgment may fitly be made to two or three. Very serviceable throughout have been the publications of the Hanserd Knollys Society, edited by the late Dr. E. B. Underhill, and to which he also made important contributions. These volumes include a translation of the wonderful *Martyrology*, by T. J. van Braght. From this most of the quotations not otherwise indicated, are made. For the second and third chapters there is a special indebtedness to the valuable book on *Anabaptism* (1521 to 1536), by Richard Heath; also for the second chapter, to the recent volumes of E. Belfort Bax, on *The Social Side of the Reformation in Germany*, more particularly the latest of them entitled, *The Rise and Fall of the Anabaptists*.

E. C. PIKE.

FINCHLEY,

December, 1903.

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# I

## THROUGH THE MIST

“Sun of my soul ! Thou Saviour dear,  
It is not night if Thou be near ;

Thou Framer of the light and dark,  
Steer through the tempest Thine own ark ;  
Amid the howling wintry sea  
We are in port if we have Thee.”

KEBLE.

**I**N 1615 there was printed a little book or tract entitled, *Persecution for Religion Judg'd and Condemn'd*. “The Epistle” with which it opens was subscribed “By Christ’s unworthy Witnesses, His Majesty’s faithful subjects; commonly (but most falsely) called Ana-baptists.” Five years later there emanated from the same source “A Most Humble Supplication” to King James I. which concluded thus: “Calling the all-seeing God to witness that we are your Majesty’s loyal subjects, not for fear only, but for conscience sake, unjustly called

Ana-baptists." These protests against an offensive nickname were by people who belong to the end of the story now to be told, but they equally express what must have been the view taken of it by a long line of witnesses who had gone before. The name Anabaptist signifies one who has been re-baptized. The so-called Anabaptists, however, did not admit that the ordinance they observed was re-baptism. In their view infant baptism was not Christian baptism, and consequently when any one on whom the rite had been performed in infancy was baptized as a believer, they counted it not a second baptism, but the first. What relation their practice bore to that of the early Churches is a question not within the province of the present writer to discuss. The Anabaptists themselves naturally believed they were walking in primitive and apostolic ways.

Anabaptist was, as intended, a name of ill-odour at first, and so through centuries it has continued to be. This can hardly be considered strange when we remember that most of the available information concerning these people is obtained from writers, either bitterly hostile, or entirely unsympathetic. Then, too, the passing madness

of a section of Anabaptists which culminated in the tragedy of Münster, has cast an undeserved shadow over a race of godly men and women who were far removed from any such fanaticism. It may be noticed that now and again Pædobaptist writers, wishing to be courteous to their Baptist brethren, are careful to dissociate them from the Anabaptists of former days ; and it is a little sad that in the breasts of Baptists themselves there has too often been an uneasy feeling which shrank from owning the connection. It is time to shake off this timorousness. Of course the Anabaptists were not perfect. Some of them were pitifully fanatical, but others were distinguished by an enlightenment and a sturdy strength which have had no small share in securing for us the advantages we enjoy to-day.

In recent years more light has been thrown upon the history of these despised and maligned people, and we are told that researches into ancient documents are still being made by competent scholars in Germany, which will probably yield much further information in the course of a few years. Judging from experience thus far, the Anabaptists have more to gain than to lose by the fullest investigation.

In this little book an endeavour is made to pick up the story of comparatively obscure, though certainly numerous, people. The great hierarchies and the State establishments of religion fill so large a space in the ecclesiastical sky, that what seems to be the twinkling light of lesser luminaries may easily be unobserved. Perhaps we need a more powerful telescope than is generally available in order to discern these distant stars, which are not necessarily less brilliant because it requires more effort on our part to see them.

Changing the figure to that suggested by the heading of this chapter, the people with whom we would make acquaintance have in the first instance to be searched for in the mists of centuries. And then we do not expect to find any bearing the designation Anabaptist, for that nickname seems to date from the early part of the sixteenth century. No one heard of Baptists or Anabaptists in the Middle Ages, but the sentiments which gave rise to the names existed in many minds and hearts.

In his book on *The Early English Baptists* Dr. B. Evans asks, "Were the ancient British Christians Baptists?" The answer seems to depend on the interpreta-

tion put on a portion of Rome's ultimatum in the prolonged and memorable controversy between the Britons and

597

the monk Austin whom Pope Gregory sent to convert the Saxons to Christianity. After careful examination of what writers on both sides have said on the disputed point, Dr. Evans concludes that no positive answer can be given, but that the preponderance of probabilities is in favour of the opinion that the British Church at that time did not practise infant baptism. Be that as it may, Rome triumphed over British Christianity, and the period called the Dark Ages had begun. In those centuries of gloom much of what Christians generally count most precious in their Faith suffered eclipse. Yet there were always pious souls who kept those treasures safely, and some of them not only rejected the superstitions which had gathered about infant baptism, but objected to the rite altogether.

1035

For instance, about 1035 two men of note, Bruno, Bishop of Angers, and Berengarius, an archdeacon, attempted a reformation in the Church, and in recounting their errors, one of the complaints was that they do "as far as in them lies, overthrow the baptism of infants."

In view of the scanty records historians give of the sects, it is hardly worth while to grope about in the Dark Ages if so be one might here and there clutch the garments of some in whom was the Anabaptist faith. We may not see them, but the decrees of Popes and Councils afford sufficient evidence of their existence. As the clouds break and the streaks of dawn appear, we may discern the forms of those whom we seek. We may not always be quite sure about them, but we can see enough to excite interest and inspire confidence. It is as sufferers for conscience sake that these humble worthies come into sight, and when we get glimpses of them more or less distinct we shall probably not be far wrong if we assume that the people they represent filled a larger space in the world than the pages of history might at first lead us to suppose.

If we were to believe certain historians, "the first time that England was pestered with heretics since the Saxons settled here" was in the reign of Henry II., about the year

**1160** 1160. "A company of ignorant rustics," thirty in number and of both sexes, having as their leader one Gerhard, whom their enemies admitted to

be possessed of learning, landed on these shores. They were called "Publicans," and their doctrine was said to have spread over a great many provinces of France, Spain, Italy, and Germany. Ostensibly they came for purposes of business, but, being earnest-minded Christians, they did not conceal the faith that was in them. Collier, who gives a somewhat lengthy account of them in his *Ecclesiastical History*, intimates that they had not time to proselytise more than one woman before they were discovered and taken into custody. King Henry, "unwilling either to punish or discharge them without examination, ordered a synod to meet at Oxford and inquire into their tenets." Gerhard said "that they were Christians, and that the doctrine of the Apostles was their rule of faith." Questioned more particularly, "they seemed sufficiently orthodox concerning the Trinity and Incarnation: but that as to many other material points they were dangerously mistaken, for they rejected Baptism and the Holy Eucharist, declared against marriage and Catholic communion." This, let it be remembered, is the way their enemies put the case against them. What is plain is that they rejected Rome's interpretation of

these matters. There seems reason for regarding them as of the same order as certain so-called heretics whom Neander describes in his *Life and Times of St. Bernard*. He mentions the name "Publicains" as applied to some of them, "particularly in the southern provinces of France." "They disclaimed all the dogmas which had been superinduced on the primitive Christian doctrines. . . . The true baptism is that of the Holy Ghost, whereby men are inwardly purified and sanctified, the baptism by water being merely symbolical; infant baptism is useless. . . . The true signification of the Lord's Supper is also spiritual, importing union with Christ as the True Bread of the soul through His doctrine." The tragic sequel to the synod may be related in the words of Stow in his *Annales or Generall Chronicle of England*. "After they could by no meanes be brought from their errours, the bishops gave sentence against them, and the King commanded that they should bee marked with an hote yron in the forehead, and whipped, and that no man should succour them with house-roome or otherwise; they tooke their punishment gladly, their captaine going before them, singing, Blessed are ye when

men do hate you : they were marked in the forehead, and their captaine both in the forehead and the chinne. Thus being whipped and thrust out in winter, they died with colde, no man relieving them."

Those poor foreigners had only time to make one convert to their views, and that a woman, before they perished in the wintry cold of an inhospitable clime, victims to a bigotry which left no room for mercy. But the seeds of heresy as grievous as theirs were lying in our English soil. Before Wycliffe's day there were many who refused the baptism which Rome made obligatory. Wycliffe's teaching concerning the Christian Church included so much of the truth of which Anabaptists afterwards became the conspicuous champions, that it need cause no surprise that in the minds of some of his followers it should have led to the adoption of their position on the rite of baptism itself. As a matter of fact a large number of them in subsequent years did become Anabaptists. A similar effect followed the work of some other teachers. John Huss, the Bohemian Reformer, was

**1384** a lad of fifteen when Wycliffe died. In early manhood he was greatly influenced by Wycliffe's writings. He "was Professor of Divinity in the Uni-

versity of Prague, and preacher in one of the largest churches in the city. . . . He was the idol of the people : but execrated by the priests." The people did not save him from the persecutor. The priests secured for him a martyr's crown. By an act of shameless perfidy he was burnt by the Council of Con-

stance. His disciple and friend,

**1414** Jerome of Prague, shared his fate. Huss and Jerome, says Robinson in his *Ecclesiastical Researches* were not Baptists, but they "taught what are called anabaptistical errors." That these so-called errors were soon rife amongst the followers of the martyrs is shown by a letter written by

Costelecius in Bohemia to Eras-

**1519** mus, dated October 10, 1519. The writer describes the sentiments of the Pyg-hards or Hussites, a sect which he reckoned to be nearly a century old. Ivimey, in his *History of the English Baptists*, gives the following quotation : "They renounce all the rites and ceremonies of our church ; they ridicule our doctrine and practice in both sacraments ; they deny orders (the hierarchy) and elect officers from among the laity ; they receive no other rule than the Bible ; they admit none into their communion till they be dipped in water, or baptized ; and they

reckon one another without distinction of rank to be called brothers and sisters."

Our attention may now be directed to two or three localities in our own country in the fifteenth century where Anabaptist testimony appears to have been borne. There is a scene in the diocese of Norfolk and Suffolk which may be discerned with more or less distinctness through the mist. From the year 1428 to 1431 the Bishop and his

**1428** Chancellor indulged in a spell of persecution. John Fox, the martyrologist, in his *Acts and Monuments* gives an account of it. He says that "about 120 men and women were examined, and sustained great vexation for the profession of the Christian faith; of whom some were only taken upon suspicion, for eating of meats prohibited upon vigil days, who, upon their purgation made, escaped more easily away, and with less punishment. . . . The others were more cruelly handled, and some of them were put to death and burned." Others, forced to abjure, sustained "such cruel penance as pleased the said Bishop and his Chancellor then to lay upon them." These people were charged with making light of baptism, and were described by their enemies as using language respecting that ordinance

such as an Anabaptist or even a modern Quaker might employ. Fox, who was horrified at the Anabaptist position, considers that the persecutors falsely accused their victims, making them out to be worse than they were. Possibly Crosby, the Baptist historian, too hastily assumes these Eastern Counties heretics to have been Anabaptists, but Fox's representation of their case justifies a strong suspicion that there were not a few of that way of thinking among them.

The Fen district, however, supplies another fifteenth-century picture, clear in outline, in which a congregation of Baptists comes into view. The light is flashed for us on that ancient company by Robert Robinson, Baptist Minister of Cambridge in the eighteenth century, whose *Ecclesiastical Researches* have already been referred to. He was a man of brilliant powers, and the quotation now to be made is from his remarkable edition of Claude's *Essay*, in which the editorial notes are so interesting as to make it difficult to read the author's text. Mr. Robinson says: "I have now before me a manuscript register of Gray bishop of Ely,  
**1457** which proves, that in the year 1457, there was a congregation of this sort in this village, Chesterton, where I live

who privately assembled for divine worship, and had preachers of their own, who taught them the very doctrine which now we preach. Six of them were accused of heresy before the tyrant of the district, and condemned to abjure heresy, and to do penance, half naked, with a faggot at their backs, and a taper in their hands, in the publick market places of Ely and Cambridge, and in the Churchyard of Great Swaffham." Robinson mischievously adds, "It was a pity the poor souls were forced to abjure the twelfth article of their accusation, in which they are said to have affirmed, *All priests, and people in orders are incarnate devils!*"

As in a seemingly accidental way like this we become aware of the existence of a congregation in the village of Chesterton in the middle of the fifteenth century, one wonders how many more gatherings of the kind there were in different parts of the country of which no records yet have met the eyes of the most diligent inquirers.

The Church of Hillcliffe, near Warrington, said to be the oldest existing Baptist Church in the country, may possibly date from this period. J. J. Goadby, in his *Byepaths of Baptist History*, refers to the evidence of "the tombstones in the extensive graveyard

adjoining the chapel." He mentions 1357 as a date still legible when he wrote, now more than thirty years ago, and adds that many of the ancient stones were worn away or buried, and that in dark days of the Church's history other stones were taken to floor a dwelling in Warrington. The correctness of the reading 1357 is now much doubted. The earliest date

**1522** to be sure about seems to belong to the former part of the reign of Henry VIII. In an examination of deeds concerning the property of the Warburtons of Arley, it was discovered that one of the family who died in 1594 had been minister of the church at Hillcliffe. How long his pastorate had lasted, and how many predecessors in that office he had must be left to conjecture; but evidently the roots of the Baptist tree at Hillcliffe strike deep down into the past. It is interesting to know that the earliest of the extant title-deeds, going far back into the seventeenth century, describes the property as "for the use of the people called Anabaptists."

The story of this people "called Anabaptists" is our theme now, and it can only be told as the mind contemplates a much wider area than our island home.

## II

### *“THE COMMON MAN”*

“Learn more reverence . . . not for rank or wealth  
—*that* needs no learning;  
*That* comes quickly—quick as sin does ! ay, and  
often works to sin ;  
But for Adam’s seed, MAN ! Trust me, ’tis a clay  
above your scorning,  
With God’s image stamped upon it, and God’s  
kindling breath within.”

MRS. BROWNING.

THEY were stirring times in Germany when the people first actually called Anabaptists came into public notice. That great uprising known as the Peasants’ War was imminent. For long years the tempest had been slowly but surely gathering. During the preceding half-century there had been now and again local insurrections, tragic in their way, and prophetic of the coming catastrophe. The dark picture that is drawn by historians of the licentiousness of the middle and upper classes, of the corruption

of the clergy, and the grievous oppressions inflicted on the poor, prevent any surprise that revolution should be in the air. A single quotation from one of the volumes of Belfort Bax on *The Social Side of the Reformation in Germany*, may serve to indicate the nature of the burdens under which the peasants groaned. He describes "the position of the cultivator of the soil robbed often of his common pasture, of the right of hunting and fishing on his own account; compelled to perform all sorts of services for his lord at any time, were it hay-making, harvest, or vintage, even though it meant to him the loss of his crop; made to furnish dues of every description payable in kind and now often in money; prohibited from catching, destroying, or driving away animals of the chase, even though they might be doing irreparable damage to agricultural produce; compelled to permit the lord's hunting dogs to devour his poultry at pleasure; obliged to offer his live stock first of all to the castle before selling it elsewhere; forced to furnish the castle with firewood and timber and (a significant item) wood for the stake on the occasion of executions. And what was the penalty for the neglect of these things? Imprisonment in the lord's dun-

geon ; the piercing out of eyes ; or, in some cases, death itself."

In his book on *Anabaptism* Richard Heath reminds us that in considering the popular movement of that time account must be taken of the fact that an "open Bible" had recently become a possession of the people. He mentions on authority that in

**1518** it was reckoned there were fourteen complete translations of the Bible in High German, and five in Low German. It was in the third year of the century that Luther made his memorable discovery of a Latin Bible in the Library at Erfurt. The study of it revolutionised his theology, and made him the reformer he became. But soon the "Common Man," to use a phrase in vogue, had read in his own language the Divine message. He found in the Word of God a friend, and naturally desired to apply the principles of the book to social life. The voice in the synagogue at Nazareth awakened hope for the dawn of a brighter day. For it spoke of "good tidings to the poor," of "release to the captives," of "liberty" for the "bruised," of "the acceptable year of the Lord."

Human nature being what it is, it cannot be counted strange that a resort to force

should have seemed the only way for making real the vision of liberty. If the Common Man erred in taking the sword to right his wrongs, his crime was almost venial compared with theirs who by their cruelties drove him to the desperate venture. Any way, the principles for which he fought were admitted by impartial persons in high places to be just and good, and he called them "Holy Gospel."

The claims of the peasantry were expressed in Twelve Articles. There were different versions of them, but they were substantially the same. The first article asserted the right of the community to choose and elect a pastor, and to displace him should he prove unworthy. The second provided for the pastor's maintenance. The third claimed freedom for every man since Christ died for him. Other articles dealt with the game laws, exorbitant rents, compulsory services, respect of persons in judgment, the restoration of woods and forests, and common lands to the people from whom they had been filched, the abolition of death dues by which widows and orphans were robbed. The last article declared that if in the others there was anything contrary to the Scripture it should be renounced. As a concluding word there was added "The

peace of Jesus Christ be with everyone. Amen." Alas, that for such a programme it should have seemed necessary to draw the sword. It is said that the first outbreak

**1524**

occurred in the Black Forest in

August, 1524. The next year witnessed tragic scenes enough, and in the next the smouldering embers of the dire rebellion were stamped out. The leadership of the movement fell into bad hands, and many savage deeds were done. The insurgents developed wild ways. Let it not be forgotten, however, what an accumulation of cruel wrongs these desperate men had suffered ere they rose in revolt. When the rebellion was quelled the vengeance taken was terrific. The Common Man, as usual, was the receiver of two blows for one, provocation first and retribution afterwards. For months the executioner was busy hanging, beheading, and torturing the victims. At the least, says Bax, 100,000 peasants and their allies fell either fighting or at the hands of the executioner. Others have put the number at 130,000, or even 150,000. No doubt in the brief hour of the peasants' triumph their masters lost heavily. More than a thousand castles and religious houses were destroyed in Germany alone in 1525, and many priceless

works of mediæval art perished. In recording this, Bax humanely and justly adds, "We must not allow our regret at such vandalism to blind us in any way to the intrinsic righteousness of the popular demands."

In these demands of the Common Man the Anabaptists fully concurred, whatever they might say to the method adopted for securing them. Baptists have always been democratic in their sympathies. Their interpretation of the Christian faith involves an enthusiasm for humanity, and they find in it healing for every part of man's being. The credit of drawing up the original articles has been given to Dr. Balthazar Hubmeyer, a man in the front rank of the reformers, who during the time the Peasants' War was raging identified himself with the Anabaptists. What actual share they had in the conflict it would be difficult to determine. Thomas Münzer, who was the very soul of the insurrection wherever his activity could extend, was one of the little group of "the prophets of Zwickau," whom Heath styles "the harbingers of the great Anabaptist movement." But his views and practices did not give entire satisfaction to the brotherhood, apart from his warlike instincts. The insurrections during the preceding half century had all been within the

pale of the Roman Catholic Church, but in this last and greatest agrarian revolt Anabaptists doubtless took an active part. They like the Hussites before them, were divided on the question of bearing arms.

In those dark days when the fortunes of the Common Man were at the lowest ebb, it was vain for him to turn to the Churches for comfort. Rome could not be expected to deal tenderly with him, and Luther failed to manifest broad human sympathies large enough to comprehend him and his cause. Luther, indeed, was positively brutal in his attitude towards the defeated peasantry. They were down, and he encouraged the men who slaughtered them. But the Anabaptist heart beat true to the human brotherhood. The Christ these people served was the Saviour of the body, as well as of the soul. They did not forget that His favourite designation of Himself was "the Son of Man." They regarded Him, too, as the light which lighteth every man. What wonder that thousands should turn away from Lutheranism to Anabaptism.

Nor can we be surprised, though we may regret it, that before long Anabaptism developed a movement for righting human wrongs which glided at first imperceptibly,

but only too surely, on to worldly lines. The militant Anabaptists were to have their day, and in one great frantic effort try to establish the Kingdom of God on earth by force of arms.

The provocations and temptations were numerous enough. Observe, for instance, what happened in the Tyrol. The Tyrolese, like their neighbours, had a scheme of social reformation. It was a large and just scheme,

**1525** and there was a time in 1525 when it seemed very likely to be carried into effect. Archduke Ferdinand and the authorities at Innsbruck had some anxious hours. But the people were defeated and 9,000 of them slain. The Anabaptists, whether they resorted to physical force or abjured it, were regarded with apprehension, for their doctrines were subversive of the tyranny which in those days passed for government. The Archduke, who in the following year became king, therefore adopted a policy of extermination against them. The Common Man was bidden to beware of these heretics, as if he did not know they were his warmest friends. Informers were employed who were even base enough to be baptized in order to betray. Fire and sword did their deadly work. Amongst the victims was

Leonard Schoener, a Baptist bishop in Upper Austria—"A man," says the martyrologist, "experienced in the holy scripture, and able to speak in the Latin language. He faithfully taught the true baptism of Christ and His apostles, the true supper of the Lord, and the articles of the Christian faith." He was beheaded January 14, 1528, at Rotenburg. Many others shortly followed in this martyr's track. The ministry of another Anabaptist bishop had been crowned with a glorious martyrdom in the previous May. This was

**1527** Michael Satler of Staufen. Calm and dignified was the defence he made before his judges, though interrupted by the insolence of a brutal town clerk. He made his appeal to the Word of God, and in conclusion said if no error were proved against him and his friends, he hoped to God the judges would repent and receive instruction. At this they were highly amused, and presently passed upon the faithful pastor this atrocious sentence, "That Michael Satler be delivered over to the executioner, who shall bring him to the place of execution and cut out his tongue; he shall then throw him upon a cart, and twice tear his flesh with red hot pincers; he shall then be brought to the city gate and shall have his flesh five times torn

in like manner." The sentence was carried out, and then "as a heretic he was burnt to ashes." The other brethren were slain with the sword, and the women were drowned. Satler's wife, as staunch and true as her husband, was drowned a few days after.

In 1529, the Second Diet of Spires, at which Ferdinand presided as the representative of

**1529** his imperial brother, gave specific sanction to the persecutors, whose hands were already sufficiently stained with blood. It was the Diet at which the Evangelical princes made their noble protest on behalf of liberty of conscience and the supremacy of the Word of God; and the well-worn name of Protestant had its beginning. Mortified by a protest which he would not accept, and could not ignore, Ferdinand was in no mood for half measures towards heretics who had no powerful defenders. The Romish party, therefore, determined that Anabaptists should everywhere be deprived of life, the method of execution to vary according to circumstances. The earliest sufferers under this decree were nine brethren and several sisters who happened to be in prison at Alzey at the time. The chief magistrate had asked the Elector Louis what he should do with them,

who replied that the county court at Alzey might try them. The court declined to pass sentence upon them, because it was simply on account of their faith they were apprehended. Under the mandate of the Imperial Diet the crime was committed from which the magistrates recoiled. The brethren were killed with the sword, and the sisters were drowned in the horse pond. One who came to the prison to comfort and encourage her sisters soon shared their fate. Shortly three hundred and fifty more in and around Alzey were proceeded against by the Elector. The narrative relates how they were "led away like sheep to the place of execution," how, whilst some were being put to death, others sang awaiting their turn, and how "by them the nobles of this world and its princes were put to shame." At length a chief agent in the pesecution exclaimed, "What shall I do? The more I condemn, the more they increase."

In those days of unrelieved gloom, Anabaptists from different countries, notably from the Tyrol, flocked by thousands into Moravia for safety. They toiled and prospered. A system of Christian communism appears to have been fairly successfully carried out. King Ferdinand would have banished these people at once,

but the local authorities were more favourable to them, and he had to bide his time.

Before many seasons of seed-time and harvest had passed the persecutor got his way. An appeal by Jacob Huter, the guide and leader of the refugees, which he put into the hands of the Marshal of Moravia, is a touching and powerful document. A sentence or two from this appeal will exhibit a striking contrast to the disastrous course into which masses of Anabaptists were then being allured. He has pathetically referred to the loss of all the substance for which his poor friends have toiled, and he says : " Now we lie in the broad forest, and if God will, with-

**1535** out hurt. Let but our own be restored to us, and we will live as we have hitherto done, in peace and tranquillity. We desire to molest no one ; nor to prejudice our foes, not even Ferdinand the King. Rather than wrong any man of a single penny, we would suffer the loss of a hundred gulden ; and sooner than strike our enemy with the hand, much less with spear, or sword, or halbert, as the world does, we would die and surrender life. We carry no weapon, neither spear nor gun, as is clear as the open day ; and they who say that we have gone forth by thousands to fight, they

lie and impiously traduce us to our rulers. We complain of this injury before God and man, and grieve greatly that the number of the virtuous is so small. We would that all the world were as we are, and that we could bring and convert all men to the same belief, then should all war and unrighteousness have an end."

It was at Strasburg that the new and fatal movement of Anabaptists received its early impulse. In that city a Zwinglian Church under State control had been established, having distinguished teachers, Butzer, Capito, Zell. The Anabaptists had a footing there also, represented by leading men, with some of whom Capito and Zell were on friendly terms. Röubli appears to have been the pioneer. Michael Satler was there for a time. So, too, was Hans Denck, a young man, but "a learned theologian," the central point of whose teaching was the doctrine concerning the inner light. Butzer called him "the pope of the Anabaptists," and artfully contrived his expulsion from the city.

In 1529 the Strasburg brotherhood received the notable addition of Melchior Hoffmann.

**1529** He was a furrier of Waldshut, who in 1523 had preached at Zurich, much to Zwingle's disgust, and since then

had itinerated far and wide with his evangel. It was he who gave the impulse already mentioned. He was an enthusiastic expounder of prophecy, who made sure he could interpret it in respect of things to come. In seven years the world's affairs would be wound up. Fearful trials were at hand, and afterwards the Son of Man would come in the clouds of heaven. Strasburg was to be the New Jerusalem, and there the Kingdom would be set up. Whilst these visions passed before the mind of Hoffmann, and he expounded the mystery of the last days, there was a distinct departure from the views of the early Anabaptists on the use of the sword and the taking of oaths. On these matters they were wont to refuse compliance with the requirements of the world. Hoffmann yielded where they stood firm. The Strasburg community was divided, but Hoffmann's influence became dominant. He visited East Friesland and the Netherlands, where he had conspicuous success. The enthusiasm was great. His followers were called Melchiorites. On returning to Strasburg from one of his tours, early in 1533, he was thrown into prison. This neither disheartened him nor his disciples. He had said it would be so. He had also said that

in a few months the delivering Christ would appear. Alas! the dungeon doors were never opened to let the devout enthusiast go free. He had no part to play in the exciting scenes which were to follow. The last words which the world heard from him were words of hope. It went on its hard and cruel way. He languished for ten weary years till the great release came. According to Hoffmann it was the time when the "Two Witnesses" prophesied. He was one of them. Before

**1533** the six months had expired which he had predicted as the period of his imprisonment, a man came forward claiming to be the second witness. This was Jan Matthys, of Haarlem. He appeared at Amsterdam, and quickly secured a position as leader. He sent out apostles and showed himself to be a man of action. Hoffmann, whilst rejecting the principle of non-resistance which the early Anabaptists held, had not counselled any resort to force. Matthys did not shrink from it. The first witness saw visions and uttered words of cheer. The second witness no longer looked with eager eye to the clouds of heaven for the signal, but fixed his attention on a spot of earth where it seemed likely the Divine Kingdom could be set up. The choice fell on

Münster, not on Strasburg as Hoffmann had announced.

Münster has been described as a city rather of angels than of men before the Anabaptists entered it. There is sad evidence that the angels must have had very soiled garments. A city, too, whose bishop could actually sell the diocese for 40,000 florins could hardly correspond to a celestial ideal. Münster had for several years been the scene of ecclesiastical and social conflicts of an interesting and exciting character, and afforded a suitable soil for the seed of militant Anabaptism to produce a speedy harvest. January 5, 1534, two apostles sent by Matthys entered Münster, and

**1534** delivered their rousing message. Within eight days 1,400 persons were baptized. Then two more apostles arrived, one of them the notorious Jan van Leiden. Early in February there was insurrection. The city became anarchic. Before the month was out a municipal election placed the Anabaptists in power. Knipperdolling and another of their members were chosen burgomasters.

And now the summons was sent out from Amsterdam calling on the brethren to repair to Münster. From all parts they made haste to respond. The authorities acted promptly.

Many bands of pilgrims were stopped. The heads of the captured leaders were stuck on poles. Five ships were scuttled and their living freight drowned. The woes of humanity lay upon the heart of the Anabaptists. They believed in a Christ who cared for man in his whole being. The interests of the poor and the oppressed were bound up with the establishment of His Kingdom upon earth. A passionate desire for its coming filled their breasts. A great expectation that it was at hand excited their imagination. When the call to action came it was like the application of a lighted match to gunpowder. A fiery zeal was awakened that brooked no restraint. There are times when masses of people as by a powerful instinct act together for weal or woe, and this was one of them. The Anabaptists felt they could wait no longer, they must be prepared to fight. Yet there were men in those exciting days who held fast by the principle of rigorous adherence to spiritual methods. Their position was supremely hard. They felt the wrongs that cried to Heaven for vengeance as keenly as their excited brethren did, and in addition had to bear their reproaches. Moreover, the authorities, dealing with the situation in their ruthless, brutal way, did not discriminate

between the innocent and the guilty. Instead of trying to quiet the disturbed districts they seemed bent on driving the people to desperation.

Münster in the hands of the Anabaptists, besieged by its Bishop with all the forces he can by money and entreaty get together, is a startling spectacle for the world to see. The sources of information as to what happened within, Heath describes as "thoroughly poisoned." The chief witness is a fellow who acted a traitor's part. Frenzied excitement and wild doings no doubt there were. But, says Bax, "The bulk of those who thronged the city of Münster in 1534 were infinitely honester and nobler than the unscrupulous ruffians of the moribund feudalism with whom they were at war." The same writer pours wholesome scorn on the conventional historian who judges the Common Man in scenes of excitement and war by the standard of peaceful times, whilst for the outrages of the ruling classes in similar circumstances he is sure to find a convenient excuse. We are not blind to the sins of the fanatics of Münster because we reserve a large share of moral indignation for the higher criminals who alike provoked and punished the revolution. Of the siege of Münster no detailed de-

scription can be attempted here, albeit there was many an incident on which any one with a touch of the dramatic instinct might well wish to linger. For instance, Jan Matthys, in the midst of a feast, suddenly seized with an inspiration which he deems divine, exclaims : "Dear Father, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." Then bidding his friends a hasty farewell, he heads a mad sortie against the enemy, only to fall with the soldiers on him, as Heath says, "like a pack of hounds on a dying stag." The setting up of the throne of David with handsome, eloquent, captivating Jan van Leiden as King, may seem ridiculous to us ; yet is there something bordering on the sublime in the desperate effort to make an ideal actual. There is an old-world splendour about the manner of it too. Then there is the clever and beautiful maiden of Friesland who would fain rival the Jewish heroine who, for the deliverance of her people, went to the tent of Holofernes and slew him. Hille Feiken ventures on her daring errand into the Bishop's camp. A traitor has been there before, and so torture and death are the lot of the would-be "angel of assassination."

The doom of the maiden was soon to be the doom of the city she tried to save. The

besieged had been reduced to fearful straits, but treachery gave the besiegers their prey.

**1535** An entrenched position within the city was held with desperate pertinacity. The promise of a free escort was given to those heroic defenders of a forlorn hope, only to be broken as soon as the surrender was made. An awful massacre ensued. Jan van Leiden and Knipperdolling were reserved to be the victims of such tortures as the diabolical ingenuity of their captors could invent. The horrible scene was enacted at Münster six months afterwards. Meanwhile, the king of what the Anabaptists meant to be the city of God was exhibited through towns and villages in an iron cage. When, in

**1536** January, 1536, the fiends in human shape had wreaked their vengeance on him and his comrade, they placed their bodies in cages, and hung them from the tower of St. Lambert's Church. Not long ago those cages were still there.

The fall of Münster closed a painful chapter in the history of Anabaptism. It is a lurid lesson on the folly of attempting to set up a kingdom of heaven by worldly methods. The Common Man was not to be helped by the Anabaptists in that way. His social uplifting can only be permanently secured by

the slower processes of moral and spiritual influence. The men who drew no sword, but knew well how to bear the cross, had the truer message for him. They never forgot the close connection between the Kingdom and the patience of Jesus Christ. The phase of Anabaptism represented by Jan Matthys and Jan van Leiden had its day, a brief day, and ceased to be. The earlier peaceful spirit, obscured by the smoke of battle for awhile, came plainly into view again, and resumed its holier sway.

### III

#### *THE WITNESS FOR A SPIRITUAL CHURCH IN SWITZERLAND*

“Raise up the ruined truth,  
Afar let each fair falsehood flee ;  
Restore Thy Church’s glorious youth,  
Her primal purity.”

BONAR.

**I**N approaching the subject of this chapter we can scarcely do better than direct our thoughts to the city of Zurich early in 1523. Attention is quickly arrested by one commanding personality, the re-former Ulrich Zwingle. He is the preacher at the cathedral, and has become the man of supreme power and influence in the city and in the canton. To him the authorities largely defer; he is the inspirer of their actions, and practically rules the State. Zwingle was a reformer in some respects more advanced than Luther, as the memorable debate between them on the Lord’s Supper

shows. There were men, however, in Zurich and the neighbourhood to whom Zwingle's views of reformation were insufficient. One of them at least, Felix Manz, was intimate with the reformer, and when in 1522 he began to doubt the scripturalness of infant baptism, they had talked the subject over together. But the views of Manz on reformation went further than Zwingle approved, and they parted company. Others mentioned by Heath as prominent amongst these more thorough reformers are Conrad Grebel, like Manz, a citizen of Zurich; Wilhelm Röubli, preacher at Wytikon; Simon Stumff, preacher at Höngg; Hans Brötli, curate at Zollikon; and Jorg, from "Jacob's House," a monastic establishment at Chur, better known by his nickname Blaurock, which means Bluecoat. Zwingle's intimate relations with the Council issued in his adoption of a system of State Churchism, such as now the members of the various Nonconformist bodies in this country agree in regarding as inconsistent with the teaching of the New Testament. Those men of Switzerland just mentioned thought so too. They could not regard a State establishment, which from its very constitution included good and bad, the godly and the profane, as a Christian Church. That must consist of

persons who had accepted Christ as their Saviour and Lord, and who in their fellowship were separated from the world. They acted according to this belief in Zurich and in other places. The gathered Church in Zurich consisted for the most part of plain folk who toiled for their daily bread, but it included Grebel and Manz, men versed in the Hebrew and Greek scriptures. Heath gives a pleasing picture of this Christian company meeting in the house of the mother of Felix Manz, with its "spirit of devotion and love," in contrast to the struggles for "the good things of this life" which had become normal in other Churches. "The New Testament knew nothing, the Brothers said, of interest and usury, tithes, livings, and prebends; but the Christians it spoke of considered their earthly goods as belonging to the whole body. Nor did they read of any among them assuming offices of authority in the world, or using the sword; their only weapon was suffering, their only means of reforming offenders, brotherly admonition, and, as a final resort, excommunication." At first we are told these good brethren did not despair of Zwingle, and that some friendly communication passed between them. But Zwingle was wedded to his theory of Church and State

and the breach widened. With these brethren, as conscientious men, separation was unavoidable ; to Zwingle it wore the aspect of treason to the State. The views which the Separatists held on the ordinance of baptism here come into prominence. A letter written to Thomas Münzer by Grebel and others, September 5, 1524, shows, Heath says, "how important the question of baptism had become to the Swiss Brothers." In it they say "baptism signifies that, through faith and by the blood of Christ, our sins are washed away, that we should die to sin, and walk in newness of life and spirit. All children who do not know the difference between good and evil will be saved through the sufferings of Christ, the new Adam." Such doctrine as this was quite incompatible with the Zwinglian State Church system, and the Council of Zurich correctly regarded the question of infant baptism as a crucial one. After the Swiss fashion, they arranged for a public discussion of it in the Council House, January 14, 1525. Most of the brethren already named, with some others, appeared and contended for the baptism of believers only. Zwingle, on the other hand, urged that infant baptism took the place of circumcision. The Council decided in favour of infant baptism, and two

days afterwards issued an edict ordering the baptism of infants within eight days of their birth. Non-compliance involved banishment.

Scarcely had this order been published before a scene, most memorable, and to some even alarming in its character, occurred in the

**1525** little company of believers. Our friend of the blue coat asked Conrad Grebel to baptize him on confession of his faith. Kneeling down, Blaurock was baptized; and then he baptized others on profession of their faith, and at their own request. The work of preaching and baptizing went on, Blaurock being specially active. At Zollikon, for instance, this earnest evangelist had signal success. He seems to have deemed a handful of water sufficient for the purpose of baptism. But the very next month after Blaurock's own baptism at Zurich, the man who baptized him met in travelling a brother who had embraced the doctrine of the baptism of believers, and regarded immersion as the proper mode. This was Wolfgang Ulman, a preacher at St. Gall, and a "professor of theology" there. At Ulman's request Grebel baptized him in the "flowing Rhine." Returning to St. Gall, Ulman preached in the open air, in the market-place, and elsewhere. "Intense feeling prevailed, and the baptized

community at St. Gall soon numbered eight hundred persons." We learn from the "Martyrology" that Ulman was burned in the Tyrol about 1528, having been ejected from St. Gall the previous year. It was not long after Ulman's baptism that "Dippers" became one of the nicknames of these advanced reformers.

To return to the company of believers at Zurich. In March they and their leaders Grebel, Manz, and Blaurock, were put in prison. There were twenty-one of them. Interrogated, and refusing to renounce their faith and practice, indefinite imprisonment seemed likely to be their doom. One of them, however, discovered an unclosed shutter, and they contrived what was afterwards reported as a miraculous escape. Away from Zurich these Anabaptists went for awhile, sowing seeds of truth which were destined to produce a goodly harvest.

The formation of a Church in Zurich composed of professed believers wore a portentous aspect to the city magnates which it is difficult for us to imagine; albeit the clergyman of some rural parish in England may have been similarly disturbed. The very existence of such a community threatened to wreck the ecclesiastical firmament, and the

pillars of the State began to tremble; and since the rulers knew no better than to treat men's consciences as if they were limbs that could be chopped off, there arose an agitation awesome in its nature. Strange prophets, staff in hand, and with girded loins, marched through the streets preaching righteousness and denouncing woe. Before long hysteria and even madness supervened. But there was something very sane at the root of the excitement. New spiritual light had entered the minds of the people; it acted like intoxication on some, but it made noble confessors of others.

In November Zurich was the scene of another public disputation on the vexed question of baptism. Grebel and Manx were there to defend their views, and Zwingle to uphold infant baptism. As might be expected the Council decided in favour of Zwingle, and in due course issued a proclamation against

**1525** the obnoxious sect. The document is marked throughout by a cool assumption that has its amusing aspect. It is too lengthy for insertion here. The authorities claim that after a disputation for three whole days from morning to night, during which time the Anabaptists enjoyed perfect freedom to state their case, Zwingle and his

colleagues by Scripture "overcame the Anabaptists, overthrew Anabaptism, and proved infant baptism to be right." The practical conclusion is thus expressed: "Therefore we ordain, and it is our will, that henceforward all men, women, young men, and maidens abstain from re-baptism, and from this time practice it no more; and that they bring the young children to be baptized. For whoever shall act contrary to this public order shall, as often as it occurs, be punished by a fine of a mark of silver; and if any shall be altogether disobedient and rebellious, they shall be dealt with severely; for we will protect the obedient and punish the disobedient according to his deserts without further forgiveness."

In that year (1525) a notable man came to Zurich, and was thrown into prison. He was Balthazar Hubmeyer, already mentioned as the one supposed to have drawn up the Twelve Articles for the peasantry. He was also the teacher to whom poor visionary Hoffmann listened at Waldshut before he began his missionary tours. The lights and shadows of his changeful career may detain us for a few moments. The materials for the picture are supplied by Dr. Underhill. In 1516 Hubmeyer is at Regensburg, the modern

Ratisbon, and in the cathedral crowds gather to hear his denunciations of the vices of the times, especially the usury practised by the Jews. The Jews become the miserable victims of the preacher's oratory, for the Senate secures an imperial edict of banishment and drives them from the city. On the site of their ruined synagogue rises a Romish chapel, and before the door is "set up a wonder-working stone statue of the Virgin." Priestly arts are not lacking, and pilgrims visit the shrine. At the feet of the goddess of Regensburg the people wildly cast themselves, and the cathedral pulpit contributes to the infatuation. Hubmeyer is a devout Catholic. But the voices of Luther and Zwingle are heard, and Hubmeyer welcomes the gospel they proclaim. For about two years Regensburg receives purer doctrine from the preacher's lips than it has ever had before. In 1519 he removes to Waldshut. Everywhere Hubmeyer is the formidable antagonist of Rome. In May, 1523, he visits Zwingle, with whom he becomes intimate, and by whose side he stands at Zurich in public disputation against the Romanists. On the question of the Lord's Supper he is with Zwingle against Luther. On the question of baptism we presently find

him differing from both. At a retired village near Waldshut he is baptized by Röubli, and himself baptizes about three hundred persons in the following months. The friendship with Zwingle is broken, and Hubmeyer is a prisoner in the city wherein his late friend is supreme. In prison he is put to torture, and promises to recant. For that recantation to be publicly uttered he is taken to the cathedral. Zwingle preaches a vehement sermon against the prisoner's heresies. Then comes the prisoner's turn. With quivering voice he begins to read, and is heard to affirm that infant baptism is without the command of Christ. The people can hardly believe their ears. It is no recantation, but a confession of the faith he was expected to renounce. A stormy scene ensues, which Zwingle quiets, and Hubmeyer is back in his cell. What happened there it is easy to guess when we hear that a public recantation was at length secured. In the middle of 1526 the prisoner escaped. Again he became the energetic evangelist, and in less than two years he was cast into

**1528** one of Ferdinand's dungeons in Vienna. On the scaffold he died for his faith. His wife was drowned in the Danube.

The threat in the proclamation of Novem-

ber, 1525, was not allowed to remain a dead letter, for in the following year it was supple-

**1526**      mented by edicts to the effect that Baptists were to be "drowned without mercy."

Within the tower of the Wellenberg, Grebel, Manz, and Blaurock endured many inhumanities. Attempts to shake their fortitude were quite useless. They were resolved to obey God rather than man. It is supposed that Grebel succumbed to the privations and sufferings of imprisonment, as he is heard of no more. In January, 1527, by order of the Council, Manz was drowned, and Blaurock, "stripped to the waist," was cruelly flogged out of the city. Before noting more particularly the martyrdom of Manz, let us spend a moment in following his exiled comrade. Blaurock had about three more years for labour, and he employed them well. He was burned alive near Klausen in the Tyrol. It is said he bore the torture of the iron pincers even joyfully, and "in the fire exhorted those who witnessed his victorious agony." It was laid to his charge "That he had abandoned the office and station of a priest, which he had before held under the Papacy; that he did not approve of infant baptism, and taught the people a

new baptism ; also that he did not approve of the Mass ; likewise that he did not hold with confession to the priest, as was ordained ; and that the mother of Christ should not be invoked, or prayed unto." The closing scene in the testimony of Felix Manz is described by Bullinger, "a bitter opponent" of the Anabaptists : "As he came down from the Wellenberg to the fish-market, and was led through the shambles to the boat, he praised God that he was about to die for His truth. For Anabaptism was right and founded on the Word of God, and Christ had foretold that His followers would suffer for the truth's sake. And the like discourse he urged much, contradicting the preacher who attended him. On the way his mother and brother came to him, and exhorted him to be steadfast ; and he persevered in his folly, even to the end. When he was bound upon the hurdle and was about to be thrown into the stream by the executioner, he sang with a loud voice, 'Into Thine hands, O Lord, I commend my spirit.' And herewith was he drawn into the water by the executioner and drowned." Dr. Underhill gives this quotation, and also an ominous word which Capito at Strasburg wrote to Zwingle, January 27th : "It is reported here that your Felix Manz hath

suffered punishment, and died gloriously; by which the cause of truth and piety, which you sustain, is weighed down exceedingly." Indeed "the cause of truth and piety," which after all Zwingle had at heart, was "weighed down exceedingly" by such a deed as that. It always is when Christian men resort to the secular arm for dealing with the consciences of men and the constitution of the Church of God. It is in the house of its friends that the Christian religion is damaged most in popular esteem. The smallest injustice perpetrated in its name inflicts a serious wound on that it was intended to further.

Two or three more examples may here be given of deeds of blood blindly perpetrated on inoffensive men and women to the disadvantage of "truth and piety."

In the district of Grüningen, Jacob Falk and Heine Reyman were diligent "in the fields and woods" in instructing many "in the gospel and institutions of Christ." In 1526 a gathering in the forest was surrounded by armed men, and fifteen of the number were seized and carried off. Falk and Reyman said, "Although we know that our baptizing is forbidden at the peril of being drowned, none the less willingly would we be baptized and baptize others also. Were we free, we

would again do the same thing." The magistrates were minded to deal leniently with the prisoners, and refused to submit to the mandate of the Council of Zurich requiring their death. In 1528 the question of jurisdiction was settled in favour of Zurich, and the two teachers were taken to the tower of Wellenberg. In September they were put to death. "Being conveyed to a little fishing hut in the middle of the river Limmat, they were pulled into the water and drowned. To the end they continued faithful to the truth."

In 1529, in the government of Basle, "some of the principal dippers" were seized, but what befell them is not fully related.

**1529** Yet a scene is depicted in which chained prisoners, among them a beautiful and greatly-beloved maiden of seventeen named Hudel, are immersed by their persecutors thrice in a day. One of them, bound and seated on the trunk of a tree, exhorts the minister of the church, who for many years has been his friend, to give up his benefice, for not until he does so can he sincerely preach the gospel. Whilst these words of testimony for voluntaryism and the Free Church principle are upon his lips, he is hurled into the abyss

of water. The others, shivering with cold, are led away, "encouraging the sad and pallid Hudel by the consideration that God, and the angelic choir, and holy men, had been witnesses of their trial. . . . 'To-day,' said they, 'we have testified that our baptism and doctrine is from Christ.'"

In 1529 Louis Hetzer, described in the "Martyrology" as "a servant of Jesus Christ, and a learned man, skilled in the Hebrew, Greek, and Latin languages, and well versed in the Holy Scriptures," was after long imprisonment beheaded at Constance. One who was with him to the end says, "A more glorious and manful death was never seen in Constance." Another says, "No one has with so much charity, so courageously or so gloriously laid down his life for Anabaptism as Hetzer. He was like one who spake with God and died."

These scenes of mingled suffering and triumph were prior to 1530. That year was marked by an accession of cruel zeal in the authorities of Zurich. A second proclamation was issued.

**1530** "Therefore we strictly command all the inhabitants of our land, and those in any wise allied thereto, and especially the superior and inferior officers, sergeants, city officers,

magistrates, elders of churches, and ministers, wherever they shall discover any Anabaptists, that they make it known to us, according to the oath by which they are bound ; that they nowhere suffer the same, nor let them multiply, but seize them, and deliver them over to us ; for according to the tenor of our laws, we will punish the Anabaptists with death, together with those who sanction or follow them. Whosoever shall assist them, or abstain from giving information concerning them, neither will pursue them, nor bring them prisoners, shall likewise be punished according to their deserts, and without any favour, as guilty of a breach of the fidelity and the oath which they have sworn to the ruling powers." But these sanguinary measures failed. On the testimony of Sebastian Franck, "the more severely they were punished, the more they multiplied." And he adds a reflection which all persecutors might well lay to heart. " Peradventure many were moved by the steadfastness with which they died, or perhaps God mocked the endeavours of rulers and tyrants to root out heresy with the sword."

Next year Zurich was plunged into wild grief and despair by the loss of the man she trusted most. Rome would tighten her hold

on Switzerland. The sword was no strange weapon in her hand, but it was not suited to theirs who would reform the Church. The fortunes of the Reformation generally in Switzerland do not belong to our story; suffice it to say that in the autumn of 1531 the Romish Cantons marched to the attack of Zurich. The dauntless Zwingle made haste to meet them, and on the fatal field of Cappel, in the prime of manhood, he fell. Zwingle took the sword, and perished by the sword. The mistake of this great man's life was the introduction of force into the affairs of the Kingdom of Heaven. The Anabaptists who were imprisoned and done to death with his sanction knew better than he the secret of that kingdom's progress. His Church system had the world's stamp upon it. To secure a Church unsullied by the world's evil ways they were willing to suffer and die. What manner of people those Anabaptists were let Bullinger testify. His witness is all the more valuable because of his unconcealed repugnance to them. "They had an appearance of a spiritual life, they were excellent in character, they sighed much, they uttered no falsehoods, they were austere, they spake nobly and with excellence, so that they

thereby acquired admiration and authority, or respect, with simple pious people. For the people said, 'Let others say what they will of the Dippers, we see in them nothing but what is excellent, and hear from them nothing else but that we should not swear and do no one wrong, and that every one ought to do what is right, and that every one must live godly and holy lives ; we see no wickedness in them.' Thus have they deceived many people in this land."

Within five years of Zwingle's death another great reformer, John Calvin, made Switzerland his home. In him the Anabaptists found a determined opponent. He had scarcely

**1537** begun his ministry at Geneva when, according to Beza, "under the cloak of piety," they were causing trouble. But in one public discussion, and by the word of God alone, Calvin completely routed them, so that they could not lift up their heads again. So Beza reports ! One would like to know what the Anabaptists had to say concerning the debate. Like the other reformers of his time, Calvin regarded the care of religion as a prime concern of rulers, and held that it was incumbent on them to punish not only crimes against society, but also sins against God ; and they took much freedom

in determining what those sins included. It does not seem to have occurred to the minds of those excellent men that in the way which they called "heresy" or "a sect," others might very truly worship the God of their fathers. They could not imagine that the men they adjudged heretics might in respect to some truths have a clearer perception than their own; or that the members of a scorned society might be less schismatical than those who would impose upon them an uniform Church order. Calvin might style the Anabaptists "a nefarious herd," and "presumptuous disturbers of the Church of Christ"; we owe them thanks for withstanding the attempt to bind souls and churches "with secular chains."

## IV

### *THE SPECTRE OF THE REFORMATION IN ENGLAND*

"A shadowy form—

It moves. It breathes ;

From its clouded crest bud the laurel wreaths—  
As a Sun that leaps up from the arms of Night,  
The shadow takes shape, and the gloom takes light."

LYTTON.

WHEN in 1521 that elegant pagan, Pope Leo X., conferred on the King of England the title of Defender of the Faith in recognition of his anti-reformation zeal, he could little imagine that in a few short years the pleased recipient of his favour would incur the papal excommunication. Nevertheless it came to pass. But when Henry broke the yoke of Rome from the neck of England he did not renounce Romish superstitions. He never, for instance, accepted so much of the Protestant teaching as Latimer and Ridley laid down their lives for in the reign of

his daughter Mary. Much less could he have any sympathy with the religious convictions of the men and women with whom this story is concerned. Henry's conception of the faith he was set to defend, and his method of defending it, stand in sharpest contrast to theirs. The whole system of teaching, conveniently described as sacerdotalism, was in their view contrary to the word of God; and the temporal sword had no part to play either in the propagation of truth or the suppression of error. Of this more will be said presently. These people were, in England, comparatively few and obscure, but they existed, and they represented a spiritual force potent in its influence, though the historian may forget to record it.

**1534** In 1534 the Supremacy Act was passed by the Parliament, and the Anglican Church received a pope in the person of the King. For refusing to take the oath acknowledging this new authority, Fisher, the venerable Bishop of Rochester, and Sir Thomas More, formerly Henry's most intimate friend, were beheaded. The submission of the clergy was complete. "The supreme head of the Church of England" was not the man to be content with a nominal authority. His Majesty intended the Church

of England to include, as Richard Hooker afterwards said it did, all the dwellers in England, and not only so, but they must conform to the standard prescribed by law. So Henry signalled the assumption of his new title by proclamations against the Anabaptists and the followers of Zwingli. Thus the comrades of those who persecuted the Anabaptists in Switzerland were their fellow-sufferers in England. In respect to the Lord's Supper the Zwinglians and the Anabaptists were substantially agreed. In their view neither the transubstantiation of Rome nor the consubstantiation of Luther was in accordance with the New Testament. To them the ordinance was a memorial meal sublime in its very simplicity. This was a deadly heresy in the eyes of the ruler of the Church of England. "Many of the King's 'loving subjects,' it is said, argued openly and arrogantly, even in taverns and alehouses, not only upon baptism, but also upon the sacrament of the altar." This was a scandal to be promptly punished. These unseemly heretics must leave the kingdom with all speed. In the second proclamation it was stated that "many strangers who had been baptized in infancy, contemning the holy sacrament, had been re-baptized, and were now spreading

their sentiments among the people." It is said that many were arrested. According to Fox the registers of London mention "certain Dutchmen counted for Anabaptists of whom ten were put to death in sundry places of the realm A.D. 1535 ; other ten repented and were saved." Fox gives the names of those who suffered death. Collier, referring to Stow, mentions the examination of nineteen Dutchmen and six women at St. Paul's, London, of whom fourteen were convicted of heresy and burnt in London and other towns.

The question of the constitution of the Church, and its freedom from secular interference on which the dispute between Zwingle and the Anabaptists so distinctly turned, was not confined to Zurich or to Switzerland ; it concerned the Protestant Reformation in general. The reformers in freeing the Churches from the embrace of Rome flung them into the arms of the princes of the world. They recognised in rulers and magistrates authorities of divine appointment, and too easily assumed that they were fitted to take a share in the government of the Church. The Anabaptists everywhere refused assent to this intrusion of the secular power into a spiritual institution. Many of them went further, and regarded the office of magistrate

as incompatible with Christian discipleship, a thing scarcely surprising when one remembers what cruel sufferings they had to bear from the magistrates of their time. In consequence of these views the Anabaptists were often spoken of as anarchists. It was a slander, sometimes repeated by men who ought to have known better. "There is not a confession of faith," says Dr. Underhill, "nor a creed framed by any of the reformers, which does not give to the magistrate coercive power in religion, and almost every one at the same time curses the resisting Baptist." Hall's "Harmony of Protestant Confessions" is referred to in justification of this statement.

In their contention then for the spiritual character of the Christian assembly, the Anabaptists were notoriously in opposition to the current beliefs of their age, and nowhere more so than in England. Here Erastianism, as the system of secular control over ecclesiastical affairs has been called, had a signal triumph. As already intimated, the royal supremacy was with Henry VIII. a very solid fact, and it determined the whole character of the new Church of England. In Archbishop Cranmer the King found an instrument fitted to frame an ecclesiastical

establishment after that pattern. The pioneers of the liberation of religion from State patronage and control, could have no easy time in a country where monarchs tried their hand at ruling consciences, and prescribing for men what their Church should be. But the views of the Anabaptists on this subject were not the only cause of their sufferings here. In Zurich it had practically been so. There it was the cherished institution of a State Church which their so-called heresy threatened. Anabaptism was like a charge of dynamite at the foundation of Zwingle's system. In England it was also a challenge to sacerdotalism, and unless disposed of would prove its annihilation. The Church of England could not be much reformed in doctrine or practice with such a supreme head as Henry VIII., and under more Protestant monarchs the process of reformation was never completed. The Anabaptists stood for more than even the Puritans of after generations tried to obtain. What then short of agony could be their portion in those hard times?

In 1536 certain articles of religion were  
**1536** considered and agreed upon in Convocation, and when they had been, to quote Bishop Burnet's phrase, "in

several places corrected and tempered by the King's own hand," they were published under the royal sanction. The article on the "Sacrament of Baptism" is given in *Strype's Cranmer*, thus: "That it was instituted and ordained by Jesus Christ as necessary to everlasting life. That by it all, as well infants as such as have the use of reason, have remission of sins, and the grace and favour of God offered them. That infants and innocents must be baptized, because the promise of grace and everlasting life pertains as well to them as to those who have the use of reason; and that, therefore, baptized infants shall undoubtedly be saved. That they are to be baptized, because of the original sin which is remitted only by baptism. That they that are once baptized must not be baptized again. That the opinions of Anabaptists and Pelagians are to be held for detestable heresies. That those who, having the use of reason, shall come to baptism, shall obtain the remission of all their sins, if they come thereunto perfectly and truly repentant, confessing and believing all the articles of the faith, and having firm credence and trust in the promise of God adjoined to the said sacrament." In rejecting the baptism of infants so strongly insisted

upon in this article, the Anabaptists believed they were following the teaching of the New Testament. Burnet, in his *History of the Reformation*, remarks that after Luther's preaching in Germany many, "building on some of his principles, carried things much further than he did." He includes amongst them those who rejected the baptism of infants. The Bishop says that "the chief foundation he (Luther) laid down was, that the Scripture was to be the only rule of Christians." This principle became a distinguishing note of the Protestant reformers. Moreover, Henry VIII. professed to base all that he required his people to believe upon the Scriptures. It is noteworthy that, in the very year in which the Articles of religion were promulgated, the whole Bible was for the first time printed in English, the work of Miles Coverdale, based on that of Tyndale. The book was dedicated to the King, and by him ordered to be placed in every parish church. That year, too, Henry told the Pope of Rome that "the world was now awake; the Scriptures were again in men's hands, and people would not be so tamely cozened as they had been." It probably never occurred to the King's mind that any of his subjects might prefer an interpretation of the Scrip-

tures different from his own. Certainly the Anabaptists had no powerful friends, either in the Court or elsewhere, who were disposed to tolerate their interpretation of the Bible. Romanists and Protestants agreed in denouncing and persecuting them. To the former they represented the worst blasphemy of a movement they detested, and to the latter they were like a haunting spectre which alternately filled them with apprehension and excited their contempt.

1537

When in 1537 the priests made their last desperate stand for Rome in the northern insurrection, known as "the Pilgrimage of Grace," the remonstrance they addressed to the King in respect to Protestant heresies contained a specially emphatic reference to "heresies of Anabaptists," which they desired should "be annihilated and destroyed." Henry also received a letter from the Landgrave, Philip of Hesse, which was a stab for the Anabaptists from the Protestant Camp.

Henry scarcely needed these incentives to violent measures, and his response was

1538

prompt. October 15, 1538, Cranmer and others received a commission by which any three or four of them were "authorised to enquire after all

persons suspected for Anabaptists' or any other erroneous and damnable heresy." They were "to confute their tenets by Scripture and the doctrine of the Catholic Church. They were likewise empowered to enjoin those they had undeceived to abjure their errors and impose any other penance at their discretion, and afterwards restore them to communion. But as for those who were obstinate and irreclaimable, they were to be excommunicated, delivered over to the secular magistrate, and punished according to law. They had likewise an authority to seize all Anabaptists books, to forbid the reading them, to burn and destroy them as they thought fit. And, lastly, they had an authority to execute the premises, notwithstanding some part of them might be contrary to the customary course and forms of law." (Collier's *Ecclesiastical History*.) In November, a royal proclamation, similar to that of four years previously, was issued against the Anabaptists and Sacramentaries, as the followers of Zwingle were called. These people "lurk secretly in divers corners and places, minding craftily and subtilly to provoke and stir up the King's loving subjects to their errors and opinions." His majesty, "like a godly and catholic prince, abborreth and detesteth the same

sects, and their wicked and abominable errors and opinions." Some have been apprehended already, "by the great travail and diligence of the King's highness and his council." They will catch as many more for punishment as they can. Any who are not caught are warned to depart from the realm "with all celerity." Of those who fled for their lives, there is a record of sixteen men and fifteen women who crossed to Holland. At Delft "they were spied by those that envied them, and fell into the tyrants' hands." After many trials they were put to death, January 7, 1539, the men beheaded, the women drowned. Of what happened in England, here are two illustrations from Stow's *Chronicle*. 1538. "The 24 of November, foure anabaptists, 3 men and one woman, all dutch, bare fagots at Paules crosse. And on the 29 of November, a man and a woman dutch anabaptists, were burnt

in Smithfield." 1540. "The 29

of April one named Maundeueld another named Colens, and one other were examined in St. Margarets Church, and were condemned for anabaptists, and were on the third of May brent (burned) in the highway beyond Southwarke towards Newenton."

For a moment the King adopted a milder

tone. In February, 1539, he issued a proclamation in which he expressed his concern for "many simple persons" among his subjects, who had been seduced by "certain Anabaptists and Sacramentaries," from abroad. His majesty trusted they were "now sorry for their offences," and "like a most loving parent much moved with pity," he would win them "again to Christ's flock," lamenting that "by devilish craft," their simplicity should have been beguiled. "Of his inestimable goodness, piety, and clemency," he is content to pardon them; but if in future they "fall to any such detestable and damnable opinions," they will receive no mercy. By the next year the gentle mood had vanished, and the old threatenings were renewed.

When Henry VIII. was succeeded by his son Edward VI., the opportunity came for

**1547** the Protestant party in the Court to carry forward their ideas of reformation in a way previously impossible. Cranmer and his associates were not slow to avail themselves of it, but they were infected with the craze for uniformity, and did not understand that it was not within their province to control consciences and souls. Consequently reformation proceeded on Erastian lines. There was no tolerance

for Anabaptists. In this reign, as in the preceding, when a general pardon was proclaimed they were excepted from it. They were a source of alarm to the rulers in Church and State. They were not a people with whom a compromise could be made. They were regarded as bringing discredit on the Reformation, and there seemed to be no way of shaking them off. Their style was disliked, and their doctrine dreaded. They were verily like some ghostly presence which must be banished at all costs, or there would be no peace. Calvin wrote to the Lord Protector Somerset in 1548, advising him to punish by the sword those "fantastical people, who under colour of the gospel would set all to confusion," as well as those who "are stubborn people in the superstition of the antichrist of Rome." Moderation, according to Calvin, was to be avoided. That might be politic and allowable in the affairs of this world. Men might renounce rights of their own for the sake of peace. But it was not so "in the spiritual rule of Christ—there we have nothing to do but to obey God." The reformation of the Church Calvin maintained was the work of God, and the servants of God, who had it in charge, must use all means in their power to carry it out. This way of putting the case is

not quite obsolete yet. In Calvin's time few knew any better.

It is passing strange to most of us that "the spiritual rule of Christ" can be mentioned in the same breath with the advocacy of the sword. We rather say with Whittier—

"For truth's worst foe is he who claims  
To act as God's avenger,  
And deems, beyond his sentry-beat,  
The crystal walls in danger!"

In the first year of King Edward's reign we find Ridley, the new Bishop of Rochester, and Gardiner of Winchester, albeit not very congenial companions, on a commission dealing with two Anabaptists in Kent, and we have Ridley's word for it that on that occasion he said to his colleague, "You see many Anabaptists rise against the sacrament of the altar; I pray you, my lord, be diligent in confounding of them." On being translated to the See of London in 1550, one of Ridley's earliest occupations was to look after Anabaptists and such-like heretics. When five years later his own agony was at hand he referred to their opinions as "detestable errors." As for Cranmer, he was during the reign of Edward the head of something rather like a Protestant Inquisition.

In Strype's *Memorials* he is referred to as on a royal commission with thirty others "authorised to correct and punish all Anabaptists, and such as did not duly administer the sacraments according to the Book of Common Prayer set forth by the King's Majesty." In 1550 Joan of Kent was burned at Smithfield. Her condemnation was grounded

**1550** on what was deemed a heterodox view of the incarnation which she

held in common with many Anabaptists. It was a delicate and abstruse question on which she sustained long debate with learned theologians. The opinion for which she contended and died was probably induced by a revolt against the Romish teaching on the subject. It is painful to reflect on the connection of Cranmer and Ridley with that tragedy. They did their best to convert the prisoner to their creed, but failing to do so they let her burn. To honest old Latimer also the Anabaptists were a fearsome folk. His references to them in a sermon before the King, March 29, 1549, cannot fail to cause his admirers deep regret. He had heard on good authority of a town in England that had above five hundred of these people in it. He took that as a sign the devil was very busy. Presently he indulged in a reminis-

cence: "The Anabaptistes that were brent here in dyuers townes in Englande, as I heard of credible menne (I sawe them not myself) went to theyre death, euen *Intrepide*. As ye wyll saye without any feare in the world chearfully. Well, let them go." He added, "There was in the olde doctoures tymes an other kinde of poysoned heretikes, that were called Donatistes. And these heretikes wente to their execution as thoughe they shoulde have gone to some iolye recreation or banquet."

Thomas Cranmer, Nicholas Ridley, and Hugh Latimer, are names that stand deservedly high in the roll of England's worthies. Their figures are carved on the Martyrs' Memorial at Oxford as representative of the heroism of the English reformers of the sixteenth century. They were brave men, one of them conspicuously so. Yet on the escutcheon of each there is a blot because they had not learned to allow to others the liberty of conscience they claimed for themselves. Men and women whose love of truth was as sincere as their own, and against whose moral character they had no charge to bring, were treated by them with cruelty and contempt. They thought they did God service even as Saul of Tarsus thought when

he persecuted the saints at Jerusalem. The wonder is that the example of his grievous error did not deter them from repeating it. We now know that the victims of their mistaken zeal had a clearer conception than they of the true nature of a Christian Church.

Yet there was one instance of similar enlightenment in the Established Church. John Hooper, reluctantly Bishop of Gloucester, held anti-State Church views as pronounced as those of Nonconformists to-day. He stood alone among his brethren. Meanwhile, some of the despised Anabaptists in Kent and Essex brought their conception of a Church to the test of experience. In

**1550** 1550 complaint was made to the Council concerning them. Strype says they "were the first that made separation from the reformed Church of England, having gathered congregations of their own." He adds: "The congregation in Essex was mentioned to be at Bocking: that in Kent was at Feversham, as I learn from an old register. From whence I also collect, that they held the opinions of the Anabaptists and Pelagians; that there were contributions made among them for the better maintaining of their congregations; that the members of the congregation in Kent went over unto the

congregation in Essex, to instruct and to join with them ; and that they had their meetings in Kent in divers places beside Feversham." Nothing worse than imprisonment seems to have befallen them, or their teachers, during the reign of Edward VI. That, however, is a sufficient reproach on a Protestant *régime*.

V

*THE CLOUD OF WITNESSES  
IN GERMANY  
AND THE NETHERLANDS*

“This one, so terrible, perhaps 'twere best  
If it, too, were forgotten with the rest ;  
Unless, perchance, our eyes can see therein  
The martyrdom triumphant o'er the sin ;  
A double picture, with its gloom and glow,  
The splendour overhead, the death below.”

LONGFELLOW.

THE finale of the lurid drama enacted  
at Münster excites horror, and yet the  
overthrow of Jan van Leiden's throne is not  
to be regretted. It would be  
**1535** difficult to imagine it permanently  
established; but had that been possible, the  
injury to the highest interests of humanity  
would probably have been greater. It is bad  
for a Church to have its movements restricted  
by the secular power. It is as bad or worse  
for a Church to take the sceptre out of  
Cæsar's hands. An Anabaptist imitation of

Rome would have been a disappointing and a mournful spectacle. Christianity was spared that humiliation. God in His good providence turned the Anabaptists from such evil ways. They learned afresh that the Kingdom of Heaven is not after the pattern of the kingdoms of this world. Of earthly dominions the empire of Charles V. was at that time the most imposing, but its forces and its glories might well remind us that the city which is from above must be built of quite other material. The divine is needed to regenerate and not to rival the human.

"The splendid empire of Charles V. was erected upon the grave of liberty." So writes the historian of *The Rise of the Dutch Republic*. In such a realm the martyrs for the Gospel might be expected to be numerous, and indeed they were. In Germany it became necessary for the Emperor to acquiesce in the Protestant Reformation. How that came to pass is not within our province to discuss. To understand the political fortunes of the Reformation it would be necessary to take account of the changeful moods of high personages in Church and State, European complications, and even the movements of those troublers of the continent, the Turks. One day Pope and Emperor are friends,

another day the Emperor sacks Rome, and holds the Pope a prisoner. Anon he makes terms with the Church he has affronted on the basis of the suppression of heresy. Thus at the Diet of Worms in 1521 Lutheranism was banned ; at the first Diet of Spires in 1526 liberty was secured for the Reformation ; and at the second Diet of Spires in 1529 measures were taken to curtail and destroy that liberty. The second Diet of Spires has already been referred to as marking the time when Protestantism was born, and as the occasion of a specially pronounced condemnation of Anabaptism. Illustration of the immediate effect of the monstrous resolution adopted has already been given. The sufferings to be described in this chapter will be subsequent to the fall of Münster.

Whilst the Emperor Charles V. was obliged to tolerate Protestantism in Germany, he was under no such restriction in the Netherlands, which, along with Spain, formed his patrimonial estate. There considerations of policy did not temper persecuting zeal. Mr. Motley, writing generally of the Emperor's reign, says : "The number of Netherlanders who were burned, strangled, beheaded, or buried alive, in obedience to his edicts, and for the offences of reading the Scriptures, of looking

askance at a graven image, or of ridiculing the actual presence of the body and blood of Christ in a wafer, have been placed as high as one hundred thousand by distinguished authorities, and have never been put at a lower mark than fifty thousand." Amongst those thousands Anabaptists had their place, and indeed the Emperor devoted to them some special attention. In June, 1535, about a fortnight before the complete collapse of Münster, he issued an edict at Brussels which showed his determination to stamp out Anabaptism from his dominions as if it were the plague.

The Emperor alludes to the fact that he has been wont to issue mandates for the punishment of heretics that "common and simple people" might be preserved from the influence of such "authors of mischief." And yet it has come to his knowledge that "many and various sectaries (even some who are denominated anabaptists, or re-baptizers) have promoted and are daily promoting . . . their said abuses and errors, in order to draw over to their false doctrine and reprobate sect a great number of men and women . . . and of them to re-baptize, to the great scandal and contempt of the sacrament of holy baptism, and of our edicts, statutes, and ordi-

nances." The edict provides "that all who are, or shall be found to be infected by the accursed sect of anabaptists, or re-baptizers, of what state or condition soever they be, their abettors, followers, and accomplices, shall suffer the forfeiture of life and estate, and shall, without any delay, be brought to the severest punishment." Death is to be by fire. Those who "sincerely repent" may be spared that special form of agony; for them there is the sword and the "sunken pit."

It was Rome that at Spires delivered the deadly blow against the Anabaptists, but there were no Protestant shields interposed to avert its violence. The attitude of the Reformers was revealed a few years later at a Diet held at Homburg, in the dominion of that fervid Protestant the Landgrave of Hesse

Cassel, August 7, 1536. "There

1536

were present eight of the nobility, seven delegates of cities, and ten preachers and learned men, when the opinions of several jurists, reformers, and Lutheran divines were laid before them on the question of punishing capitally the so-called heresy of anabaptism." A summary of the conclusions shows practical unanimity on the need for resort to force. The judgment of Melancthon, which Dr. Underhill says "appears to have been sent

as the deliberate conclusion of Luther, Cruciger, Pomeranus, and Melancthon, in a letter to the Landgrave dated the 5th of June" is given as follows : "That the anabaptists may, and ought to be restrained by the sword. That those who have been sent into exile, and do not abide by the conditions, are to be punished by the sword." A cruel decree was adopted, no doubt with the hope that punitive measures might be the means of saving simple folk from what were deemed pernicious errors. The treatment prescribed included fines and imprisonment, semi-starvation, floggings, and brandings on the cheek, with death as a last resort if other devices failed. If it should be urged in extenuation that the scare of Münster was fresh in men's minds, such a consideration counts for very little ; for these cruelties were a continuation of others perpetrated on inoffensive people before the madness of Münster began, and were now directed against a religious belief quite apart from any question of crimes against the government and society. There were in prison at Marburg, not far away, harmless members of the obnoxious sect whose views must have been familiar to the reformers. They rejected infant baptism and the priestly view of the Lord's Supper. They would not attend the

public services because they said the Word of God was not taught, the ministers were hirelings, and the church system admitted of no godly discipline. They held the opinion on the Incarnation for which Joan of Kent suffered. They were willing to obey the magistrates, but they would not become soldiers. In November they had three days' discussion with Bucer the theologian, many learned men being present.

In that same month of August in which the Protestant Diet was held at Homburg

**1536** there was a great gathering of Anabaptists at Bockholt, in Westphalia. Dr. Evans inserts in his *History* a communication he had received from Professor Müller, of Amsterdam, relative to it. Three different tendencies were plainly exhibited in the conference, and like separate streams they went their several ways. There were violent men "who had escaped from the fall of Münster, but had learnt nothing by that fall." These "ran as bands of pilgrims through the country with Jan Willemesz as their head." Others "less violent in practice, but in theory as fanatic," presently became the adherents of the visionary David George (Jovis), out of whose visions sprang what was called "The family of love." There were also

the "more calm and sedate people," with whom our story is mainly concerned. They were for a time as sheep without a shepherd. In December a leader came to them. Of him we will speak presently.

It was about two years after this (September 25, 1538) that Landgrave Philip wrote the

**1538** letter to Henry VIII. already

referred to, the purport of which may now be given because it made so plain that from the two mutually hostile religious parties in Germany the Anabaptists had nothing to hope. The Landgrave had found certain letters in the hands of an Anabaptist in which reference was made to England, and he thought it a friendly office to admonish the King concerning such dangers. "There are no rulers in Germany," he says, "whether they be Papists or professors of the doctrines of the Gospel, that do suffer these men, if they come into their hands. All men punish them grievously. We use a just moderation which God requireth of all good rulers." Philip then describes the process of this "just moderation." Divers learned men are ordered to confute the heretics by the Word of God. "If any do stubbornly defend the ungodly and wicked errors of that sect, yielding nothing to such as can and do teach them

truly, these are kept a good space in prison, and sometimes sore punished there; and yet in such sort are they handled that death is long deferred for hope of amendment." When there is no further hope of that, "the obstinate are put to death." The Landgrave regrets that "in many parts of Germany where the Gospel is not preached" the magistrates under the Bishop of Rome not only, as is proper, use severity against the Anabaptists, but also "slay good men utterly alien from their opinions." He has no doubt the King of England "will put a difference between those two sorts, and serve God's glory on the one side, and save innocent blood on the other."

There is a story of two ministers in the Tyrol in the year the above letter was written which shows the persecutor busy at work and the sort of people he was dealing with. On Leonhard Lockmair the priests tried all their arts to secure his fall, for he had been one of them, and they succeeded. They then wanted him to travel through the country for a year making known his recantation. This he refused to do. He was in bitter anguish because of his apostasy. At that time another minister, Offrus Gryzinger, became a fellow-prisoner, and by sympathetic

treatment was instrumental in restoring poor Leonhard. Both of them proved faithful unto death. Offrus had been difficult to catch, but once in the hands of his enemies they tried hard to get him to betray his friends. He gave them to understand that he was prepared, God helping him, to endure any torture they might inflict rather than be a traitor. They took him at his word, but they tortured him in vain. Finally they cast him alive into the fire, and burned his body to ashes. In the examination of Offrus the spirit which prevailed amongst the Anabaptists after the fall of Münster is exhibited. It was the old spirit which had never been lost by many, and now revived in others. They asked Offrus whether it was not true that if the Anabaptists became numerous they would strangle those who would not join them? He replied, "If we did so, we should be no Christians, but only such in name. If you too were real Christians, you would not torture or kill, or destroy any one."

It is now time to name the new leader who joined the Anabaptists a few months after the Bockholt congress. This was Menno Symons, a Catholic priest, curate of Witmarsum. He was then in the prime of life. So much did he contribute to the revival of Anabaptism

that many of its adherents came to be called Mennonites. Several years before Menno had been much impressed by the martyrdom of a tailor in Friesland. The brutal treatment the poor man received is recorded in the criminal sentence-book of the court. He was to be executed with the sword, his body laid on the wheel, his head set upon a stake "because he has been re-baptized and perseveres in that baptism." Menno thus refers to the event: "It now happened that I heard from some brethren that a God-fearing pious man, Sicke Snyder by name, had been beheaded at Leeuwarden, because he had renewed his baptism. This sounded wonderfully in my ears, that any one should speak of another baptism. I searched the Scriptures with diligence, and reflected earnestly upon them, but could find no trace of infant baptism."

In December, 1542, the authorities of West Friesland issued at Leeuwarden a savage proclamation against Menno Symons, **1542** "formerly pastor of Witmarsum," but now "infected with the sect of anabaptism and other evil doctrines." He has been banished from the country, and they have heard that he has secretly returned, and that he is striving night and day to seduce the simple people "from the holy Christian faith

and from the unity of holy Church." They threaten with loss of life and confiscation of goods any who shall shelter him, or give him food or drink, or receive or keep any of his books. And they offer "one hundred gold carolus-guilders" with pardon for offences to any who will deliver him up. About three years before a farmer had been apprehended because "from compassion and brotherly love he had secretly harboured Menno Simons in his great distress."

The farmer bravely confessed his faith, was stretched upon the wheel and beheaded. Menno had many narrow escapes. There is a story told by his daughter of one of them. A man agreed with the magistrates to deliver her father up for a sum of money or lose his head. One day he went with an officer to arrest him. Menno passed by in a boat, but the man said nothing until he saw Menno land some distance off, and then he exclaimed, "See! the bird is flown." The officer called him a villain. Why did he not speak before? He answered, "I could not speak; for my tongue was held." The would-be informer lost his head! The sleuth-hound persecutors

**1559** of Menno Symons missed their prey. He died a natural death at the age of sixty-five. A few years before the

end of the journey he thus referred to his troubles. "For eighteen years with my poor feeble wife and little children has it behoved me to bear great and varied anxieties, sufferings, griefs, afflictions, miseries, and persecutions, and in every place to find a bare existence, in fear and danger of my life. While some preachers are reclining on their soft beds and downy pillows, we oft are hidden in the caves of the earth; while they are celebrating the nuptial or natal days of their children, with feasts and pipes, and rejoicing with the timbrel and the harp, we are looking anxiously about, fearing the barking of the dogs lest persecutors should be suddenly at the door; while they are saluted by all around as doctors, masters, lords, we are compelled to hear ourselves called anabaptists, ale-house preachers, seducers, heretics, and to be hailed in the devil's name. In a word, while they for their ministry are remunerated with annual stipends and prosperous days, our wages are the fire, the sword, the death."

Four years before Menno passed away Charles V. exchanged the throne of the empire for a monk's cell. His son Philip succeeded him as King of Spain and the Netherlands. The imperial

crown went to his brother Ferdinand. From neither of these potentates had Protestants in general anything to hope, and Anabaptists were sure to be treated worst of all. Philip made haste to ratify his father's sanguinary edicts. In the proclamation by which he did this, he did not forget to mention the Anabaptists. Against them special precautions had to be taken, for they were wont to "change their places of abode, in order to infect simple people in countries where their evils (were) not known." This may be a testimony to a missionary zeal observable in Anabaptist history. It was in Philip's reign that persecuting ferocity culminated in a decree of the Holy Office dooming all the inhabitants of the Netherlands to death! (1568.)

In the Netherlands the Anabaptists formed but one company in the great army of those who died for their faith, and yet their "Martyrology," with no pretence to completeness, is a bulky one. The mere reference to numbers, however, conveys to the mind a very slight idea of the tribulation through which our brethren and sisters passed. Only as we fix our attention on special instances can we receive any vivid impression of what it was, and then imagination will fail to picture adequately the awful reality.

It would be a sickening task to attempt to describe the various devices for inflicting torture in order to extort from those faithful men and women a recantation of their faith, or the betrayal of their comrades. Many were burned, sometimes over a slow fire, and often having been exposed to "most distressing tortures" beforehand. Others were beheaded, and some even buried alive. Drowning was perhaps the least painful, though the most contemptuous way of disposing of these patient sufferers for Christ's sake. We often read of women drowned in wash-tubs, or tied up in sacks and cast into the river. At Leeuwarden a lame youth and an invalid girl were gagged and crammed into one sack, and at midnight thrown into the canal outside the city wall. In another place a father, mother, and son were like brute beasts thrown into the water with stones fastened to their necks.

At Rotterdam in 1544 a number of brethren and sisters were betrayed at one of their gatherings by a woman who came to borrow a kettle. No tortures would induce them to recant. The men were beheaded and the women "thrust under the ice until death followed." In the criminal records of the same city (1558) there

1544—  
1558

is given an account of the examinations of various prisoners against whom no fault could be found except their admission that they had been baptized on a profession of faith, and that they rejected the priestly doctrine concerning the Supper of the Lord. At Vienna in 1545, one Oswalt of Jamnitz is told he must recant or be drowned. Two brethren come to comfort him, to whom he commends his wife and children. He is kept in prison a year and six weeks, and one Wednesday night is quietly taken out of the city and thrown into the river. At Dordrecht in 1558, the records tell us that Digna Peters, "a burgess of this city, now a prisoner, has . . . openly confessed and acknowledged herself to have been re-baptized, &c., and likewise to have attended assemblies contrary to the faith, the holy sacraments, and other services and ceremonies of the holy church." She was first disfranchised, and then "put into a sack at Puttox Tower and drowned."

To tear a man from his wife and children, or the mother from her little ones, was no infrequent occurrence. There is no pity in the bigot's breast. Yet sometimes the executioner shrank from his task and performed it unwillingly. There is an instance named of an executioner refusing to act, though he

risked the loss of his office by doing so. It was at Dordrecht in 1558. The prisoner, Joris Wippe, had often fed the man's wife and children, and with tears in his eyes he declared he could not kill his benefactor. "One of the thief-takers" was set to do it. Joris was drowned in a wine-cask in the prison at night. He died in the prime of life, leaving behind him a wife and seven children, four of them girls. His last letter to his elder children was written in mulberry juice because they had taken his ink away!

The letters these confessors wrote from dimly-lighted prison or noisome dungeon are full of interest and pathos. The tenderness of their affections and the constancy of their faith are very manifest. There is observable a quivering sensitiveness to pain, but it is united to a brave resolve to endure whatever comes, God helping them. The sufferers are plainly men and women of like passions with others, but the pages which they pen are illumined by the hope divine. "Eleven of us were taken into a deep dark vault," writes one of them, and presently adds, "I said, 'Methinks we are with Jonah in the fish's belly, it is so dark; we must like Jonah cry unto the Lord, that He may be our comforter and deliverer;

for we are now deprived of all human comfort and succour,' at which we were not cast down, but praised and thanked God that we were permitted to suffer for His name's sake."

The narratives of the prisoners as they stood before rulers and councils contain much that is interesting and inspiring. It would be worth while to quote from several of them did space permit. A glance at one must suffice. A maiden named Elizabeth who had been a nun appeared at the Council House at Leeuwarden in January, 1549. They made the mistake of supposing her to be Menno Symons' wife, and asked her upon her oath if she had a husband. She replied, "It is not permitted us to swear; but our words must be yea, yea; and nay, nay. I have no husband." Elizabeth was quite willing to answer concerning her faith, but resolutely refused to inform against her friends. Asked by the Council if she did not consider their Church the House of God? She replied, "No, indeed, gentlemen, for it is written, *Ye are the temple of the living God*; as God says, *I will dwell in them, and walk in them.*" "What do you think of the most Holy Sacrament?" To which Elizabeth answered, "I have never in my

life read in Holy Scripture of a Holy Sacrament, but I have read of the Supper of the Lord." Presently she retorted on them, "Did not the Lord continue sitting there? Who, then, could eat the Lord's flesh?" "What do you hold concerning infant baptism, that you should have yourself baptized again?" Elizabeth answered, "No, gentlemen, I have not been baptized again; I was baptized once on my confession of faith, for it is written that baptism belongs to believers." "Are our children then lost because they have been baptized?" "No, gentlemen, far be it from me that I should condemn the children." At a second examination the thumbscrews were applied. Elizabeth exclaimed, "Oh, I cannot longer bear it!" The Council bade her confess, and they would ease her pain. The brave girl cried to God, "Help, O my God, Thy poor handmaid, for Thou art a helper in time of need." Help came. She remained faithful to the end. That, so far as this world, was to be "drowned in a sack."

At this same Leeuwarden there was one day apprehended a boy of fifteen. It chanced that the lady of the Governor of Friesland saw him, and engaged in a long conversation with him. He answered her questions with

much wisdom and becoming modesty. It seemed as if her mind were disabused of some prejudices against the Anabaptists in consequence of the interview. She concluded the conversation thus : "I find many good qualities in you ; but your greatest error I hold to be your baptism ; that I do not think to be of God." The lady had the youth brought to her many times, but his faith was too firmly fixed to be shaken, and he died a martyr for it.

As the witnesses were not daunted by the physical pains inflicted upon them, so they were unmoved by the predictions of the priests respecting their portion in the world to come. "Pray for this deceiver, for he is going from this fire into everlasting fire." So spake one of those fierce zealots at Ostend (1548) to the people who gathered to a burning. He had his answer from the martyr's lips, "So you say; but I know better."

Now and then sharp words were spoken, as by two women at Leyden (1552) in rebuke of the cruelty and superstition of which in the name of Christianity they were made the victims. Little wonder that passing by the church on their way to prison they should say, "O den of murderers ; choir of devils!"

Or that one of them should in court fling out the taunt, "Your flour-god is eaten by the spiders and worms; I will not partake of it!"

And what was the reputation these people bore? Bayle, in his Dictionary, cites Guy de Bres, a writer who, he says, "has exerted his whole force in refuting this sect." This

**1565** is what he wrote in 1565. "Its great progress was owing to three things. The first was, that its teachers deafened their hearers with numberless passages of Scripture; the second, that they affected a great appearance of sanctity; the third, that their followers discovered great *constancy in their sufferings and deaths.*" Guy de Bres proceeded to show, to his own satisfaction, that the Anabaptists were nevertheless heretics. His admissions concerning them are the more valuable on that account. We note the coloured glasses through which he views them, and we see that they were people who fed upon the Word of God, who recognised that they were called to be saints, and who knew how to suffer and die for their faith. If a supplementary word is needed, it is easy to find one. Let the Justices of Ghent (1550) supply it. Incidentally in examining an Anabaptist prisoner

they said—"We know that your people do not lie, therefore answer us."

These were the people whom the world and the Church it patronised doomed to extermination, and the sentence was remorselessly executed. Go through the Tyrol, and amidst its mountains and valleys you shall hear no voices to remind you of them. Traverse other spacious regions where once they swarmed, and you shall meet no representatives of their faith and order. The iron heel of the persecutor crushed them. They were sheep amongst wolves, and the wolves dealt with them in their savage way. Were their lives a failure? Was their testimony vain? Mr. Worldly Wiseman and that other gentleman who liked Religion best when she had silver slippers on, and the sun was shining, have no doubt about the answer. Their answer need not be ours. There is a fire yet in the ashes of the martyrs at which we may kindle a torch or two. And sure as we do so their work is not over, nor is the end of it in sight.

## VI

### *IN THE DAYS OF THE TUDOR QUEENS*

"No honours of war to our worthies belong ;  
Their plain stem of life never flowered into song ;  
But the fountains they opened still gush by the  
way,  
And the world for their healing is better to-day."

WHITTIER.

**I**N 1553 the daughter of Catharine of Aragon became Queen of England. In the following year she married Philip, son of the Emperor Charles. The **1553** year after that the Emperor abdicated, and Philip became King of Spain. Of horrors similar to those with which the subjects of Charles had been long familiar, Englishmen were soon to have a taste. The promises of liberty of conscience with which Mary began her reign were quickly forgotten, and all whose faces were towards the light learned that the dungeon and the stake might be the penalty of fidelity. In

that dread time the men who had shown little mercy to the Anabaptists found none for themselves. It is good to remember that they proved as heroic in their hour of trial as had been those whose sufferings they had sanctioned. In the martyr-roll of Queen Mary's reign, the names of Anabaptists have an honoured place beside the names of men who had despised and persecuted them.

Humphrey Middleton, one of the pastors of the "gathered congregations" in Kent and Essex previously referred to, was re-arrested in 1554, and with three others burnt at Canterbury, July 12, 1555. At Uxbridge,

**1555** August 8th, several of the same persuasion also passed through the fiery trial. One of them was John Denby, a gentleman of Maidstone, who, as he sang a psalm in the fire, was struck on the mouth by a faggot which a brute threw at him, at the instigation of one Dr. Story. Another was Robert Smith, an able man who, when Bonner was examining him, showed the bishop to be a mere child in his hands. At the stake he preached whilst he was burning, and when all thought him dead, the burnt and blackened form rallied to utter an expression of joy. It seems probable that Smith was one of the company wont to meet at a

house in Bow Church-yard. Nine others appeared before Bonner at the same time. One, a woman named Elizabeth Warne, was burnt at Stratford. Of the brethren one was burnt at Stratford, another at Ware, and a third at Barnet. The others died at Lollards Tower. "Their dead bodies were cast into the open fields, and in the darkness of midnight interred by some of the faithful" (Evans).

Reference to the treatment of the Anabaptists in the reign of Mary may be concluded with a representation Strype gives in his *Ecclesiastical Memorials*, of episcopal and clerical energy in Essex. In April,

**1558** 1558, "by virtue of a commission from Bonner the Bishop, and some warrants also from the Council, Dr. Chedsey and Thos. Mowrton, the Bishop's chaplains, and John Boswel, his secretary, went down to Colchester and Harwich, to examine the heretics in those parts of Essex, and to condemn them to be burnt. For though they had burnt so many, yet many more remained here. Bonner gave them a letter to the Lord Davey, to countenance and further them in this business. And the officers and under-sheriff were zealous to serve them. Upon their first coming down,

they examined six in one day and condemned them the next. And so were making quick work with many more. Some whereof had been not long before spared and sent home by means of Abbot Feckenham, who grew tired of these butcheries." Just then Chedsey was summoned up to court on business. "This was a mighty surprise to the Bishop's commissioners ; for they were very loath to be taken off." Chedsey wrote to the Lord Chancellor to excuse him, he was so busy, and he would come "as soon as he had done the King and Queen's affairs." He wrote also to the Bishop, saying that if he left off in the midst of the examination it would "set the country in such a rore" that their estimation would "be forever lost." He adds, "Would to God the honourable Council saw the face of Essex as we do see. We have such obstinate heretics, Anabaptists, and other unruly persons here, as never was heard of." Strype further records : "But though Chedsey was called away from the exercise of his bloody office, yet the two other that remained behind followed their work." They wrote to the Bishop, April 22 : "Yesterday being Thursday, we finished the examination of three most obstinate and cumberous heretics: for one of them held

us all the forenoon, and the other two all the afternoon. This morning, being Friday, we intended to finish the examination of the other three, and at afternoon to pronounce sentence to them all, if we shall find cause." From all this it is evident that the obnoxious heretics were still numerous, notwithstanding the efforts to exterminate them. A sad example is also afforded of the hardening effect of persecution on those who engage in it. They evidently enjoy the horrid occupation, and in the picture drawn by their chief they resemble hounds with difficulty called off from the prey. It was in the spring this raid on heresy in Essex was carried on. Before winter the cruel Queen had gone to her account, and King Philip had ceased to have any share in the government of England.

The accession of Elizabeth to the throne marked the beginning of a new era for the

country, but not one of tolerance

1558

for the Anabaptists. They were not to enjoy the religious liberty which is the right of every citizen. Even so good a man as Bishop Jewel, who, having narrowly escaped martyrdom in the preceding reign, was appointed to the See of Salisbury, wrote of them to his friend Peter Martyr, as among

the "pests" which "as mushrooms spring up in the night." Similar language the reformers continued to employ respecting them. It was evident that the Anabaptist position was as fatal to the Anglican as to the Roman system. Both Erastianism and Sacerdotalism must perish if that position is sustained. From the latter the reformers were only partially emancipated, to the former they were completely in bondage. Note the varied experience of the Church of England in a few short years. Henry VIII., its first supreme governor or head, assumes an anti-papal attitude, and does not scruple to send Papists and Protestants to the stake together, the former for denying his supremacy, and the latter for withholding reverence from the Mass. Under Edward VI. the Church becomes in a measure Protestant. By Mary it is flung back under the feet of the Pope. Elizabeth becomes Queen, and tells the people that there must be no alteration, no abandonment of Romish rites and ceremonies *until* she and the Parliament make known their pleasure. The Act of Uniformity is passed in June, 1559,  
**1559** and then woe betide any who cannot shape their creed, and conform their practices to the royal mandate. Against

such dealing with the consciences of men and the Church of Christ the Anabaptists made their quiet, but firm protest. For the most part their testimony was one of patient endurance. Now and then their voices were audible.

We are not left altogether in ignorance of what they felt and said when the new tyranny began to work. "Their words," says Dr. Underhill, "are embalmed for us in the pages of a bitter foe." This is no other than the redoubtable John Knox, who "had been chafed by their opinions on predestination; so that in the year 1560, he poured forth upon them an objurgatory stream of indignant

**1560**      reproach." Knox is so fair as to

print the things he attempts to answer, so that the Anabaptist is heard speaking for himself. And he hits hard. He charges the reformers with being persecutors. Some of them God has already dealt with, and he will therefore "make no mention of them at this time." But books were published "affirming it to be lawful to persecute and put to death such as dissent from others in controversies of religion, whom they call blasphemers of God. Notwithstanding, afore they came to authority, they were of another judgment and did both say and write that

no man ought to be persecuted for his conscience' sake ; but now they are not only become persecutors, but also they have given, as far as lieth in them, the sword into the hand of bloody tyrants. Be *these*, I pray you, the sheep whom Christ sent forth in the midst of wolves? Can the sheep persecute the wolf? Doth Abel kill Cain? Doth David, though he might, kill Saul? Shortly, doth he which is born of the Spirit kill him which is born after the flesh?" Thus does this bold protester tempt the lightning. If we do not see the flash, at least we hear the roar of the thunder. " You dissembling hypocrites," exclaims Knox, " cannot abide that the sword of God's vengeance shall strike the murderer, the blasphemer, and such others as God commandeth by His word to die ; not so by your judgments ; he must live, and may repent." Knox is horrified at what seems to him the blasphemous allusion to the fate of Cranmer, Latimer, Ridley, Rogers, Bradford, and others. He makes little use of "the sword of the Spirit" in confutation of the Anabaptist, but plainly warns him that he would resort to another kind of weapon if he had the chance.

The vital point at issue between the reformer and the man he thought to smash is

easily indicated. Knox insisted that under the name of conscience the Anabaptist included whatever was right in his own eyes. Really what he contended for was that he should be permitted to see with his own eyes what the Master's orders were, and not with the eyes of John Knox, or any other man. Knox, like other reformers, being set free from certain errors, and having a new vision of truth, forgot that clouds might remain, and that other eyes might discern things as yet hidden from theirs. It was hard to have the arguments which they had used against the Papists turned with deadly effect upon themselves. But this happened when they attempted to force the consciences of their fellow men. It was all very well for Knox to say to the Anabaptist, "Your privy assemblies, and all those that in despite of Christ's blessed ordinance do frequent the same, are accursed of God." The Anabaptist paid no more heed to the anathema of John Knox than that sturdy Scot did to the anathema of the Pope.

Persecution raged on the Continent. The war between France and Spain had ended, and the alliance of Henry II. and Philip II. boded ill for Protestantism. A single historical reference will suffice to show that their

cruelty would only be limited by their power. They planned a massacre of even larger proportions than that which, years after, made St. Bartholomew's day for ever a dark

**1559** monument of infamy. It was averted by the young Prince William of Orange. One of a delegation from Philip to the French Court, Henry supposed him cognisant of the plot. But the Prince was far too noble to be made a confidante of in such villainy, and he was horrified at the revelation of it. He had, however, sufficient self-control to show no sign of surprise, and soon set himself to frustrate the diabolical conspiracy. William the Silent he was afterwards called. Then began the long tragic drama in the Netherlands, which Mr. Motley so powerfully describes in his *Rise of the Dutch Republic*, a drama in which the Prince is the one great heroic figure standing alone, the undaunted and unvanquished champion of freedom against the armies of Spain under her ablest commanders.

Protestant refugees at this time came to England seeking safety under the Protestant Queen. As in Edward VI.'s reign they were generously treated. Amongst them came Anabaptists, but for them there was no

welcome. "To stop the spreading of their infection," says Collier, "the queen, by a proclamation, ordered these heretics, both aliens and natural-born English, to depart this kingdom within one-and-thirty days. The penalty of staying longer was imprisonment and forfeiting their goods. Notwithstanding this order, several screened themselves with their protestancy, and joined the French and Dutch congregations, both in London and the coast towns."

Considerable energy was expended in the endeavour to suppress Anabaptism of native growth, as well as to prevent its importation from abroad. "But the Anabaptists were most numerous, and for some time by far the most formidable opponents of the Church" (Marsden quoted by Evans).

About this time Henry Nicholas, a Westphalian, who became a leader in the Netherlands of the followers of David Jovis, introduced "the Family of Love" into England. What he believed and taught it would be difficult to define. Dr. Underhill, giving extracts from his writings, styles them "rhapsody, if not blasphemy." Very unintelligible they are. The Familists, as they were called, have been confounded with the Anabaptists, though their views on baptism

are an entire mystery. It is admitted, Belfort Bax tells us, that Nicholas and his followers repudiated the Anabaptists, and there is evidence that the Anabaptists repudiated them. Dr. Underhill's conclusion is thus expressed, "It is evident that the Familists had nothing in common with the baptists, with whom they were often unfairly associated by opponents."

The fires of Smithfield had long died out, it might have been hoped never to be rekindled. But a fire was lighted there once in Queen Elizabeth's reign for the old cruel purpose. On Easter Day, April 3, 1575, a raid was made on a company of about thirty

**1575** Flemish Baptists assembled in a house in the suburbs of London "without the bars of Aldgate." Twenty-seven were captured; two escaped on the way to prison. Tried by commission, these people confessed their faith, and were all threatened with death by fire. Immense pressure was put upon them to recant, including the persuasions of the minister of the Dutch Church in London. Five yielded and "were set for a gazing-stock" in St. Paul's church-yard, "a fagot bound on each one's shoulder as a sign that they were worthy of the fire." Others were banished,

and presently those in prison were only five. One of them died there. The sentence with which all were threatened was executed on two. One of them was Jan Peters, a poor and aged man with nine children. His first wife had been burnt at Ghent, and the first husband of the wife he left behind had also suffered martyrdom. The other victim was Hendrik Terwoort, a young man, a goldsmith by trade, and well-to-do. Preparation was made for the execution as though it were imminent, and then it was put off to another day, and yet another. This was done as if to terrify the martyrs and their friends. Early one morning the end of the drawn-out tragedy came. No alleviations of the physical pain were employed, and the sufferers were mocked and misrepresented to the last.

Fox, the martyrologist, who was familiar enough with the Queen for her to call him "Father Fox," had tried to get the punishment mitigated. He had no word of sympathy for the sufferers, but he deprecated burning them. He wrote also to the prisoners, not tenderly, but sharply, saying, "It is sufficiently apparent that for long you have disturbed the Church by your great scandal and offence." The prisoners replied

to Fox, and also made an appeal to her Majesty. Both documents evince a transparent sincerity, an honesty of mind, a loyalty of conscience, and withal a quiet dignity of character. Here is a paragraph from the supplication presented to the Queen: "We testify before God and your Majesty that were we in our consciences able by any means to think or understand the contrary, we would with all our hearts receive and confess it, since it were a great folly in us, not to live rather in the exercise of a right faith than to die, perhaps, in a false one. May it also please your Majesty, in your wisdom and innate goodness, to consider that it were not right, but hypocrisy in us to speak otherwise than with our hearts we believe, in order to escape the peril of temporal death; that it is impossible to believe otherwise than we in our consciences think; and also that it is not in our power to believe this or that, as evil-doers who do right or wrong as they please. But the true faith must be implanted in the heart of man by God; and to Him we daily pray, that He would give us His Spirit to understand His Word and Gospel." That they were not rebellious or seditious it is almost unnecessary to say. In their letter to Fox they

thank him for his "kind intentions," are assured his efforts "arise from love," although he has "written somewhat sharply." It is a lengthy and beautiful letter, and contains this short confession of their faith: "We confess, as you say, that Jesus Christ, the Son of the living God, became, or was born, truly man of the virgin, in the fulness of time. We confess, that Christ had not a fantastical or false body, but true human flesh, like ours in all things, sin only excepted. . . . Lastly we believe all that the Holy Scriptures have testified of Him. And whether we live or die, we place our salvation, not in our works or holiness, but alone on His death and resurrection." A confession of faith drawn up by Terwoort and Peters when in the "frightful den" is most truly evangelical in character. If these men were fair representatives of the Anabaptists of their day none of us need be ashamed either of their creed or their conduct. They were amongst those "of whom the world was not worthy."

Not yet was England a harbour of safety for the storm-tossed Anabaptists from the Netherlands. The time was coming when Holland would set her an example. Already there was one man with a mind sufficiently enlightened and a heart large enough to

approve a full tolerance of religious beliefs and practices. That man was William of Orange. The Protestant statesmen with whom he took counsel did not share his true Catholicity. A sentence written by the most intimate of the Prince's advisers, quoted by Motley, exhibits their narrow range of vision in contrast to their leader's breadth. It reveals at the same time the sterling worth of the men and women concerning whose treatment they disagreed. "The affair of the Anabaptists," wrote Saint Aldegonde, "has been renewed. The Prince objects to exclude them from citizenship. He answered me sharply, that their yea was equal to our oath, and that we should not press this matter unless we were willing to confess that it was just for the Papists to compel us to a divine service which was against our conscience."

Little is recorded concerning the Anabaptists during the later years of Queen Elizabeth's reign. Judging from such glimpses of them as we get, they were quiet people who met in secret and out-of-the-way places to worship according to their consciences. They contribute nothing to the vaunted splendour of the Elizabethan Age. There were amongst them no gifted states-

men or learned professors. They had no names to place beside the lights of literature, and philosophy, and poetry, which shed lustre on the period. No one would dream of mentioning them in the same breath with the distinguished voyagers who, by their discoveries, enriched the world, or by their valour made the name of England famous. Yet they were in their way as brave as the bravest whom men applaud. Moreover, they were the custodians of imperishable truth, which, like buried seed unseen by the passing traveller, is destined to produce a harvest for the good of mankind.

## VII

### *THE CLEAR, STRONG, VOICE OF FREEDOM*

"I feel the soul in me draw near  
The mount of prophesying ;  
In this bleak wilderness I hear  
A John the Baptist crying ;  
Far in the east I see upleap  
The streaks of first forewarning,  
And they who sowed the light shall reap  
The golden sheaves of morning."

LOWELL.

**A**T the time that Queen Elizabeth died, amongst the gatherings of devout people who worshipped in separation from the Church of England there was **1603** one in the north which was like a handful of corn from which a wonderful harvest was to spring. A Church was formed at Gainsborough, in Lincolnshire, in 1602. Two years later, on account of the distance members had to travel to the meeting, a friendly division was agreed upon, and a Church was

formed in the Manor-house of Scrooby in the adjoining county of Nottingham. Of this Church Richard Clifton was the pastor, and associated with him was John Robinson, as teacher. John Smyth was the pastor of the Church at Gainsborough. He had been the esteemed vicar of the parish, but becoming convinced that the Separatists were right in their views of truth, he joined them. In 1608 the Scrooby Church migrated to Amsterdam, a year later to Leyden, and after eleven more years a portion of the Church crossed the Atlantic in the *Mayflower*. The interesting narrative of the Pilgrim Fathers, as they are called, does not belong to our story, but it touches it at this point. John Smyth and a number of his

**1608** friends had gone to Amsterdam two years before the Clifton and Robinson company from Scrooby, and in the first instance they all joined a Church already existing there. After awhile Smyth renounced Calvinism, and also embraced Baptist sentiments. This led to estrangement, separation, and sharp controversy. It was agreed, however, on all hands that Smyth was a man of learning, a powerful preacher, and of unstained moral character. Good evidence of his evangelical belief is extant.

Adam Taylor, in his *History of the English General Baptists*, regards him as their father, if not exactly their founder. Those from whom Smyth separated complained of his instability. He himself maintained that he had advanced further into the light. Critics in the Established Church who regarded separation as altogether bad, thought that Smyth was carrying it to its logical issue. Bishop Joseph Hall told Robinson his position was untenable. He must go forward to Smyth, or come back to the Church of England. Dr. S. R. Gardiner describes Smyth as "a man of ability and eloquent, but of a singular angularity of character." Since the authorities referred to were Smyth's opponents, it is possible Dr. Gardiner's stricture may be too severe. Smyth's ministry abroad was not of long duration. He died about 1610.

After the decease of John Smyth, the most prominent English Baptist abroad was Thomas Helwisse. He had been active in assisting the migration of his comrades to Holland, but he began to doubt whether after all they had taken the right course. He and his friends came to the conclusion that their brethren and sisters in England needed their sympathy and support, and that they ought

to return and stand beside them in their trials. This decision was adversely criticised by some as though it evinced a rash and even vainglorious disposition. Yet, surely they deserve credit for conscientiousness and courage. Thus, whilst Independents were soon to move forward to the new world, there unwittingly to lay the foundation stones of a great empire in which civil and religious liberty should be unrestricted, Baptists re-

**1612** turned to the home land to take their humble share in the work of making England also the realm of freedom.

About three years after the return to England, there emanated from their company the treatise alluded to in the opening sentence of this volume on "Persecution for Religion." The contention, as stated on the title-page, was "That no man ought to be persecuted for his religion, so he testifie his allegiance by the oath appointed by law." The writer begins with an epistle "to all that truly wish Jerusalem prosperity and Babylon's destruction." He then constructs a dialogue carried on by "Christian" and "Anti-Christian," an "Indifferent man" interposing remarks now and then. The burden of Anti-Christian's part in the discussion is, "Why come you not to church?" "Well, you must come to church."

"You must come to church, or else go to prison." Christian contends that worship, to be worth anything, must be spiritual, and that spiritual worship cannot be secured by the commandments of men. "Earthly authority belongeth to earthly kings, but spiritual authority belongeth to that one spiritual king who is King of kings." No king can coerce the consciences of his subjects, and the attempt to do so makes many hypocrites. Moreover, hypocrites of a dangerous type. "Can any godly, wise man think that he that playeth the dissembling hypocrite with God, that he will do less with men, and will not work any villainy, if it were in his power."

In the previous year, there appeared a publication entitled *Religion's Peace : or a Plea*

**1614** *for Liberty of Conscience.* The

author was Leonard Busher, a citizen of London, and a Baptist. Dr. Underhill remarks, "Though not the first of the noble band who manfully claimed liberty of private judgment in divine things for himself and for all others, Busher's work remains to us as the earliest treatise known to be extant on this great theme." Leonard Busher was a poor man, who found it difficult to bear the expense of publishing a book. A pathetic allusion which he makes to the lot of the brotherhood to

which he belonged is luminous as an explanation of the comparatively small space in history occupied by the people whose story is now engaging our attention. "We that have most truth, are most persecuted; and therefore most poor. Whereby, we are unable to write and print, as we would against the adversaries of the truth. It is hard to get our daily food with the labours of our weak bodies and feeble hands. How then should we have to defray other charges, and to write and print?"

Busher begins by an address to the King and the Parliament. He tells them "in all humility" that "no prince or people can possibly attain to the one true religion of the gospel which is acceptable to God by Jesus Christ, merely by birth." A man must be born again for that. "Persecution is a work well-pleasing to false prophets and bishops, but it is contrary to the mind of Christ." No king or bishop can command faith. That is God's gift. "Set him not a day, therefore, in which, if his creature hear not and believe not, you will imprison and burn him." "You may force men to church against their consciences, but they will believe as they did afore, when they come there." One or two sentences will suffice to show the firm, broad ground on

which this citizen of London took his stand. "It is not only unmerciful, but unnatural and abominable ; yea, monstrous for one Christian to vex and destroy another for difference and questions of religion." And he urges that "the King and Parliament may please to permit all sorts of Christians ; yea, Jews, Turks, and pagans, so long as they are peaceable, and no malefactors." Nothing like this ever fell from the lips of the men who figure largely in Church Histories. The plain, hard-pressed Baptist, who had spent part of his life in exile, and had much ado to make a living, has larger views than theologians and reformers whom Church historians delight to honour. The great champions of freedom of the seventeenth century had not come upon the scene when Leonard Busher lifted up his voice in clear, strong tone. George Fox and John Bunyan were not born. Oliver Cromwell was only a youth of fifteen. John Milton was a little boy of six years.

Here our story must end. Baptist Churches were about to be multiplied in the country—General Baptist and Particular Baptist—names indicating a wider and a more restricted conception of the Atonement, and in doctrine generally the Arminian and the Calvinistic types. John Canne, a Baptist, was soon to

set himself to prove to reluctant Nonconformists that consistency with their principles necessitated actual separation

**1634**

from the Established Church. That

doctrine was "hated and odious" then, but to many spiritually-minded Christians it came as a "truth of the Lord." The brave souls nerved themselves to act upon it, and the Free Churches of to-day are largely the fruit of their fidelity.

In looking back upon the way traversed we see that the interest of the story begins in the consciousness evinced of a direct relation of the individual man to God, which brooked no outside interference. This seemingly exclusive attitude is quite compatible with broad human sympathies, since every man has to do with the same "faithful Creator." In the Anabaptists these sympathies glowed, and for a time the fortunes of large numbers of them were clearly identified with those of the Common Man. Not on that account, however, may Anabaptism be treated as merely, or even predominantly, a social movement. The energies of the soul are not the soul itself. The soul is greater than any of its activities. Man is built on a larger scale than an existence bounded by the cradle and the grave. The Anabaptists were men who thoroughly

believed this. Anabaptism was distinctly religious in its origin, and continued to be supremely so in central and south-eastern Germany even when in the north-west and the Netherlands a blending of millenarianism and militarism was producing the most lamentable results. After that came the new era marked by the leadership of Menno Symons, when the old spiritual and peaceful principles became characteristic again of Anabaptists more generally. The Anabaptist horizon was wider than this world, and when the earthly prospect was dark and desolate the gates of the Celestial City were still open to the eyes of faith.

The Anabaptists recognised in the Bible the word of God, and the right to interpret it for themselves they would never surrender. The Bible was their book, and, generally speaking, they knew little of any other. Believing in "the light which lighteth every man," they deemed each one responsible for his treatment of the inner authority. God, who inspired prophets and apostles in the earlier days, spoke also to them, and why should there not now and again be in their experience a blaze of inspiration? Some of their teachers laid such stress on the doctrine of the indwelling Christ as the "light of

men" as to treat the scriptures as well as the sacraments as superfluous for the Christian. But the Bible was the standard of appeal, and by its precepts the everyday life was regulated. The application of these principles naturally gave rise to great diversity of opinion and afforded room for the development of many extravagant ideas. As we have seen, fanciful interpretations of prophecy concerning the last days not only fascinated the imagination of multitudes, but also allured them into deeds of fanaticism and folly. Occasionally a slavish adherence to the letter of scripture caused the step from the sublime to the ridiculous to be taken—as when some people wishing to become as little children began to imitate childish ways, and so appeared no better than imbeciles. The mystical element, ever present in the Anabaptist faith, had its perils, which were not always avoided. Hard by the height on which the mystic stands is an abyss, and bordering on the region of sanctity is a miry slough. It would be unreasonable to decry the heavenly places because of the dangers which lie so near to them. And certainly the foibles, and even the serious faults of some sections of a people, must not be permitted to obscure the great testimony

borne through troubled centuries at the cost of terrible sufferings.

That testimony may be summed up as the claim of freedom for conscience and for the Church in order to the working out of an ideal purity. The spiritual realm was one in which magistrates and monarchs had no power, nor might priests or popes intrude upon it. The grace of God was conveyed to a man spiritually, and was not tied to ceremonies and sacraments. To the Anabaptists the Supper of the Lord was no "awful sacrifice," but a simple bread-breaking significant of the relation of the brethren to their Saviour and to one another. On the manner of observing baptism they differed. Many, as we have seen, recurred to immersion, deeming it the primitive mode, and they were called "Dippers." At Münster sprinkling sufficed. Amongst the Mennonites affusion was the mode. But there was agreement in regarding believers, and not infants, as the proper subjects for baptism. In view of the tremendous importance attached to infant baptism nothing can better illustrate the moral courage of the Anabaptists than the way in which they disregarded the terrors with which the priests invested the neglect of it. Bishop Bonner

expressed the dominant Church idea when he said to Robert Smith, "I believe, I tell thee, that if they die before they be baptized, they will be damned." And when Sir John Mordant afterwards said to the prisoner, "By our lady, sir, but I believe that if any child die without water, he is damned," Bonner joined in, "Yes, and so do I, and all Catholic men, good Mordant."

It is said that in the days of the siege of Münster, after an oration by Jan van Leiden, his disciples dashed through the streets and lanes of the town more like dancing dervishes than Christian folk, and as they wildly brandished their naked swords they cried, "Father, father, give us light!" A pitiable spectacle, and yet pathetic! It is a cry from the very depth of human need. The answer to it kills fanaticism, and secures life. It is light, ever more light, that we all want. Our fathers found it in Jesus Christ—"the light of life"; and so may we.



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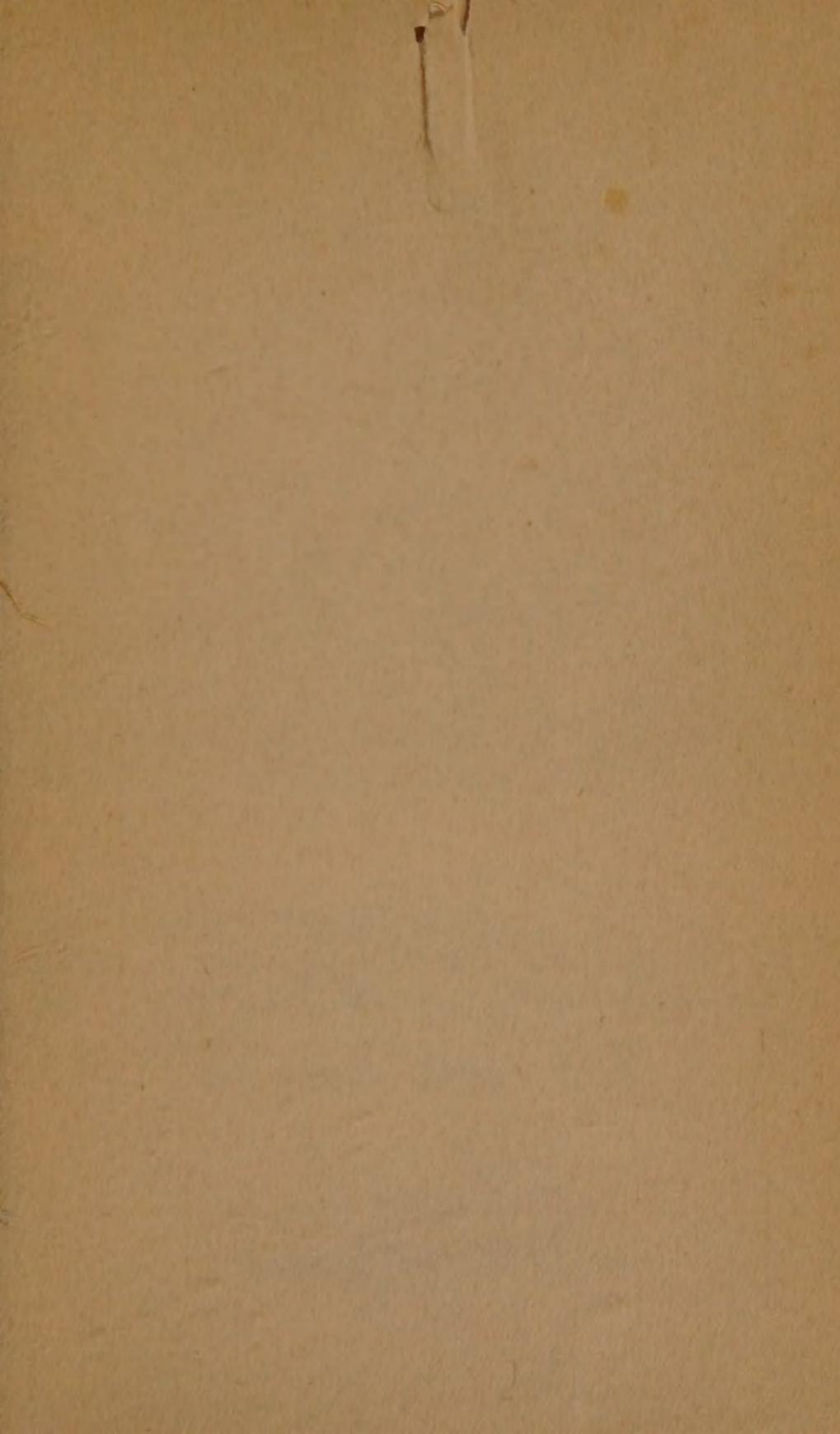
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